

Animation

P • L • A • N • E • T

Covering The World Of Animation

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Vol.1/Issue 1

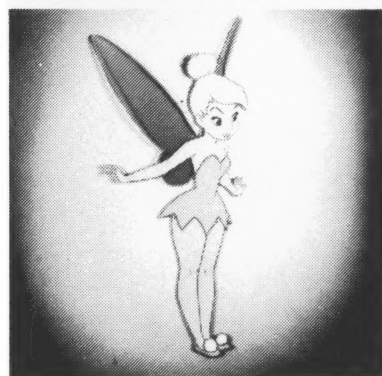
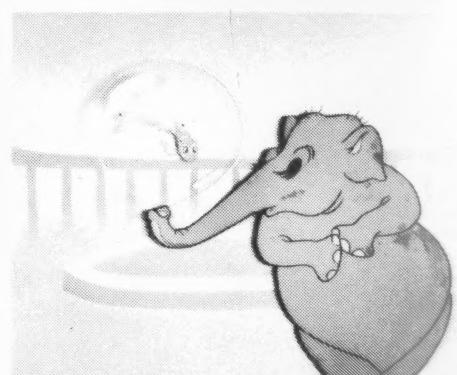
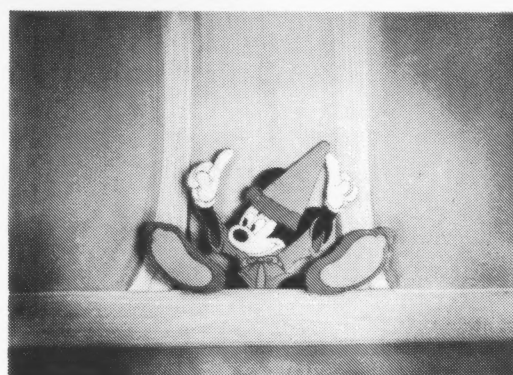
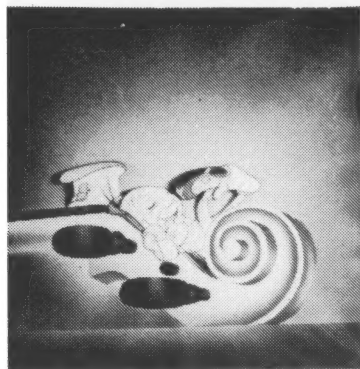
Premiere Issue

• The making of the new Disney feature Hercules

• All about those crazy MAD TV. animations

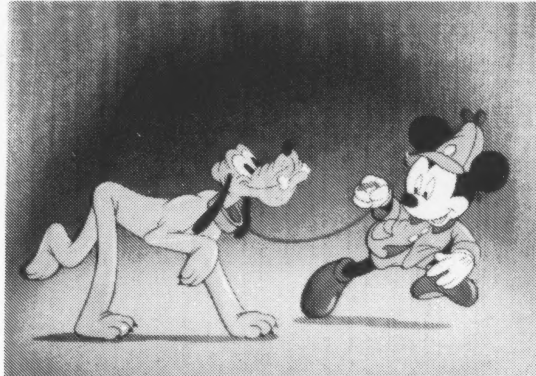
• Voice actor mania!

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Summer 1997 Volume One Issue One

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Animation Planet is not associated with any animation art gallery or studio. This is an independent publication serving the interests of animation fans and professionals.

About the Cover...

Hercules brings the team of John Musker and Ron Clements (*The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin*) back to the screen. (© Disney)



Welcome to **Animation Planet**, the new magazine covering the world of cel, stop motion, and computer animation. From the people behind the scenes to honest reviews about their results, **Animation Planet** will be covering animation like no other publication. With a corps of writers, many of whom work in the animation industry, the writing in **Animation Planet** will always be crisp, lively, and knowledgeable.

Some of you may be familiar with me and my work from my many years at *Animato! The Animation Fan's Magazine*. I started with *Animato!* as a columnist years ago and in the summer of 1992, my former partner and I purchased the magazine. For over four years I was the person who made 90% of the editorial decisions and was the magazine's principal writer. In March of this year, our partnership was dissolved, and I no longer co-owned the magazine that had meant so much to me.

Since I believed that the kind of editorial material I had presented in *Animato!* has a growing market, I've launched this publication with the help of many people. The response I've received from writers, artists, readers, industry folk, friends, and my family has been overwhelming and truly heart-warming, and I thank you all. My wife Mary and my mom, Sue, deserves special credit for all their support. A special tip of the hat also must also go to my friends Steve

Bissette, Marge Bleier, Mark and Jeannie Martin, Rob Engman, and the big guy, Gene Gumbs.

If you're looking for animation art auction results, this isn't the place. Nor will you find the latest corporate promotions within the animation industry. If you want to find out what is happening that affects you as a *consumer* of animation, then **Animation Planet** is your magazine.

So take a look around, and let me known what you think. Address your letters of comment to **Animation Planet**, 17 Spruce St., Springfield, MA, 01105 or e-mail me at mdobbs@javanet.com.

I have to plug two wonderful publications. First up for the *Animation Planet* seal of approval is the new issue of *SPFX: Special Effects Magazine*. Ted Bohus and Harriet Harvey have put together a fantastic salute to Jim Danforth in issue 5. Send along \$5.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling to Ted A. Bohus, 70 West Columbia Ave., Palisades Park, NJ 07650.

The second publication I have to highlight is the limited edition of Myron Waldman's novel without words, *Eve*. Toon Art, a long-time leader in the limited edition cel industry, has entered the book field with a reproduction of Myron's highly acclaimed graphic novel which was first published over fifty years ago. The story and drawings lose none of

their charms and Toon Art has done a superb job in re-packaging the book. For more info, call Toon Art at 1800-723-2357.

While some nay-sayers still predict a crash in the animation industry is forth-coming, I can't agree. G-rated animation is a mainstay of sell-through video. The truth is that if a tape is aimed at little kids and is priced under \$20.00, its success is almost assured. How else could one explain the financial goldmine Universal has in its awful *Land Before Time* franchise or the success Don Bluth's films have had in the video market?

Now, what used to be Hanna-Barbera is jumping on the direct-to-video bandwagon with three \$12.95 tapes entitled *Cave Kids* featuring Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm. Now I know what you're thinking..who cares? Well, both parents and video retailers. According to my crystal ball, direct-to-video will be a ever-growing part of the industry. For instance, there are three direct-to-video sequels to *Hercules* currently in the works, besides a television series!



News

Voice-Over Vignettes

I was talking to Maurice LaMarche (The Brain, Dizzy Devil and about a zillion voices on *The Critic*) the other day about the funny things that can happen to voice-over talent because their voices are known by the public, but their faces aren't. He confessed that sometimes he wishes for fame and other times he is glad that he isn't easily recognized.

Maurice said, "On one hand, it's a blessing cause I can sit in any restaurant in L.A. and eat in peace but on the other hand sometimes I want to say, 'Oh! By the way, I'm the Brain.' Famous friends have told me fame is not all it's cracked up to be. I guess it's kind of nice to be able to turn it on and off."

"One night I was out with Jon Lovitz (*The Critic*) and a guy came up to the table and stood next to me and stared at Jon for awhile."

"Well, that's what it's like to be famous. Still want it?"

Jim Gallant is a voice artist who has been around awhile so he wasn't too surprised when he went to an audition and the copy asked for a "Jim Gallant type voice." After reading that, he thought the audition was only a formality. However, he found out later that someone else got the job. They thought he didn't sound enough like himself! **Linda Tindall**

Manga Looking for Shorts

Manga Entertainment, Inc. has announced the launch of its new "Animated Shorts Division." Beginning in autumn 1997, Manga Entertainment's Animated Shorts Division will release a series of full-length films in the US and abroad. Each film will be a "mini-festival" of original animated short films, collected from all over the world, and created by new and unknown talent, as well as

can contact the San Diego office of Manga by sending a copy of their film on VHS to 964 Fifth Avenue, Suite 330, San Diego, California, 92101. Include contact information or call (619) 531-1696 for more information.

New Show from Kids' WB

Histeria is a new animated show heading to WB stations in the fall of 1998. Created by Tom Ruegger the comedy takes a look at world history through quick comedy sketches, informational bits and songs which will include great moments from every era of history, interviews with historical figures and reenactments of well-known and not-so-well-known stories of the past. The show is designed to fulfill the new mandatory FCC guidelines requiring broadcasters to air a minimum of three hours per week of educational children's programming.

Ruegger has been the executive producer for Warner Brothers Television Animation



For a good thirty embarrassing seconds, he was staring and cocking his head like a German Shepherd. Then he finally said, 'You're him aren't you? You're that guy, that guy from *Saturday Night Live*. Wait a second. Stay right there. Stay right there.'

"Then the guy comes back with his two kids. One is five the other is three. There is no way these kids stay up past 11:30 and Jon hasn't been on *Saturday Night Live* for five years. But he comes back with his kids. 'This is him! This is him! This is the *Saturday Night Live* guy. Go ahead, ask him for his autograph.'"

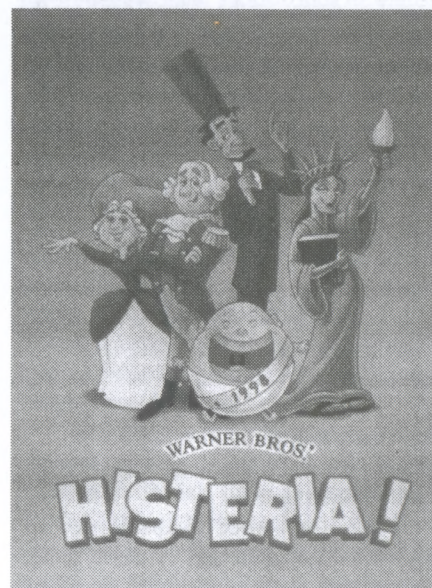
"You can see that the kids are embarrassed and uncomfortable, but Jon very nicely signs the autographs and he's very pleasant to the children. When he's finished, the guy goes, 'Well, thank you very much. All right, I love you. I love you, man.'"

"Jon watches him walk away and after a beat he looks me dead in the eye and goes,

famous names in animation. These films will be geared toward adult audiences. Manga Entertainment's Animated Shorts Division will be based in San Diego, California and directed by animation veteran, Jan Cox, whose experience includes producing *Spike & Mike's Festival of Animation* and *The Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation* at Mellow Manor Productions.

"Manga Entertainment is in the perfect position to provide the best licensing opportunity for animators of independently produced short films. We will enable them to have their work seen in theaters worldwide by the general public," said Cox. In years past, animated shorts were commonplace as part of the programming in American movie theaters. Manga Entertainment recognizes the need to bring the art form of independently produced animation films to the big screen and make them accessible to the public.

Animators who wish to be considered

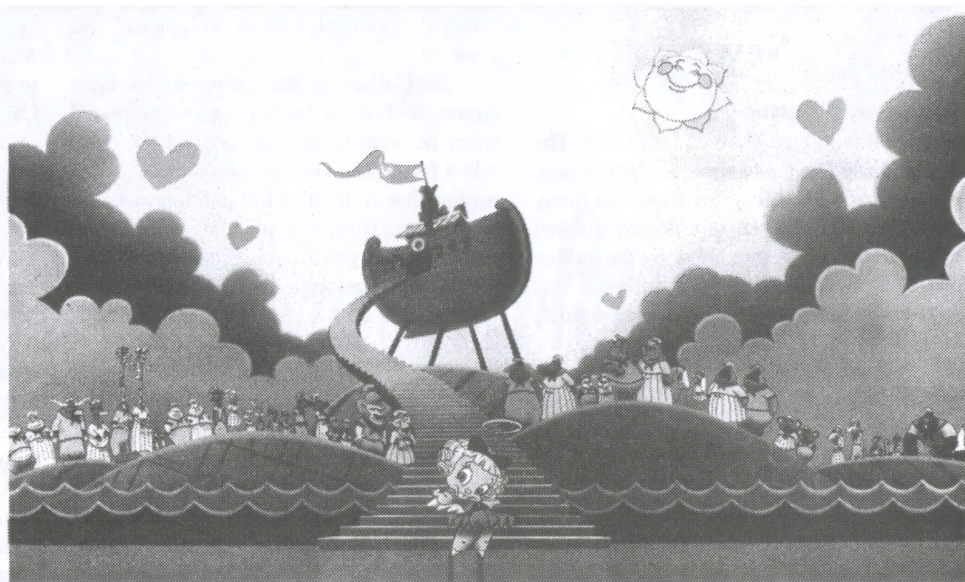


since June 1994 and has worked on such shows as *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Animaniacs*, *Pinky and the Brain*, and more.

Upcoming Disney Video Releases

Disney plans to re-release *The Jungle Book* this fall. The digitally remastered film will have a suggested retail price of \$26.99, and will have a behind-the-scenes short on the making of the film and a movie song book. Expect it in the stores by mid-October.

Coming in November is another direct-to-video production, *Beauty and the Beast: The Enchanted Christmas*. Not a sequel, apparently the film's story takes place during the time Belle is imprisoned by the enchanted prince. Also coming out at Christmas will be a \$14.99 re-release of *Nightmare Before Christmas*.



Darla Dimple pours on the charm in *Cats Don't Dance*. (© Turner Pictures, Inc.)

New Animated Rudolph Heading to Theaters for Christmas 1998

Goodtimes Home Video, a mainstay of the direct sales video scene, has teamed up with Golden Books Family Entertainment to produce a \$10 million new animated musical based on the venerable property. While no details have been released, the companies are trying to attract "big name" talent for the soundtrack (a la Elton John for *The Lion King*) and plan to have a shopping mall tour in the summer of 1998 (just like Disney's *Hercules* mall tour).

Dragon Ball Z is a Big Hit for the International Channel

The International Channel is a cable outfit which brings programming from around the world to American audiences, and one of the biggest successes for the channel has been the anime series *Dragon Ball Z*. Broadcasted in Japanese with no subtitles, the language barrier hasn't been too much of a barrier apparently for anime fans who've discovered the show on their cable systems. A sequel to *Dragon Ball*, this series picks up where the former show ended. It can be seen Sunday night at 9:00 p.m. Pacific Time.

Reviews

Theatrical

Cats Don't Dance

Turner Feature Animation/ Warner Bros. Family Entertainment

I didn't know what to expect from *Cats Don't Dance*, an animated tribute to movie musicals with songs by Randy Newman and choreography by the late Gene Kelly. Happily,

while *Cats* is no classic, it's the best non-Disney animated feature since *Balto*.

As *Cats* begins, Danny (Scott Bakula), a naive, starstruck cat from Kokomo, IN, arrives in 1930s Hollywood seeking fame and fortune. However, Danny soon learns that the humans who run the movie studios don't want animal actors to become stars so their talents are wasted or ignored. The other animals Danny meets have given up their dreams of cinematic glory; the best roles they can get are bit parts in "Little Arch Angel," a musical about Noah's Ark starring Shirley Temple-like child actress Darla Dimple (Ashley Peldon). When Danny tries to expand his small role, he runs afoul of Darla, who despite her nauseatingly sweet public image is really a ruthless, tyrannical brat. Undaunted, Danny convinces his animal friends to believe in themselves again and do an audition for the head of Mammoth Studio. Vengeful Darla, feeling threatened by the potential competition, sabotages the audition, leaving the animals worse off than before. His hope finally shattered, Danny is ready to leave to go home, but an encounter with a human bus driver (David Johansen of New York Dolls/Buster Poindexter fame) renews his sense of purpose. Danny resolves to get the animal performers a second audition, which of course leads to a final showdown with Darla.

Although *Cats Don't Dance* is a musical comedy, it doesn't have the Broadway-like structure that Disney and its imitators have used since *The Little Mermaid*. The film's slapstick humor, rapid pacing, and exaggerated character designs give it a 'toony feel that sets it apart from most recent animated features. *Cats* has been compared to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, but it reminds me more of *Gay Purr-ee*, which also had feline heroes, was set in the

past, and featured references that most young children wouldn't understand.

One thing that *Cats* has in common with classic Disney is that the main character is likeable but bland; despite his brash self-confidence, Danny doesn't leave a lasting impression. The best character in *Cats* is Danny's feline love interest Sawyer (Jasmine Guy), an aspiring actress resigned to being a talent agency secretary. When Danny is trying to set up his auditions, Sawyer is even more resistant than the other animals, because her showbiz experience was so painful she never wants to go through the wringer again. I felt a lot of empathy for Sawyer and her story engaged me more than Danny's did.

Cats Don't Dance includes some animation clichés (the "believe in yourself" moral; the use of prejudice against animals as a metaphor for human racism) but it's a charming, likable movie that deserved more success than it received. The theatrical release wasn't publicized well; I hope the video will receive more promotion. **Mark Lungo**

TV

King of the Hill Fox Television

Mike Judge's newest television effort, at first glance, supports the argument that too many animated television shows are merely drawn sitcoms which use little of animation's potential. After all, couldn't Judge have produced a live-action sitcom about Hank Hill, his wife Peggy and son Bobby all living the deep in the heart of suburban Texas?

The answer is "sure he could have," but animation gives its creators a total control that even the best casting agent in Hollywood

couldn't match. Despite its stiff animation, *King of the Hill* works so well because seldom has the depiction of suburban life been done with such subtle, but cutting, satire. Animation generally is used for an exaggerated humor that looks silly in live action and what makes *King of the Hill* so refreshing is that Judge dares to do the exact opposite. He doesn't seem as interested in big gags and broad strokes, but in the examination of the little events in life. While Hank Hill and his family may be less obviously "cartoony" than *The Simpsons*, the differences in style provides an effective combination for Fox's hour of prime-time animation. Both shows put me on the floor laughing.

The episode concerning Hanks's bout with his bowels was right on the mark in its depiction of a guy constipated in more ways than one. The show in which Peggy wins the Boggle championship of Texas was actually touching in its silly way. The character of Bobby, the Hill's 12 year-old slacker-to-be son, is one of the most interesting characters on television.

King of the Hill is a winning effort.
GMD

Spawn HBO

Sex, violence, profanity, adult situations - all the ingredients for HBO Animation's first foray into the world of animation. But do all these adult elements make for a good story and animation?

It seems as if the people making this show got too excited about what they could do and forgot about what they should do. Sure you can grab the audience's interest with all the aforementioned things but the bottom line is that a good story is what keeps people

attracted to the show. The first three episodes are basically an introduction to the whole Spawn saga created by Todd McFarlane and help to introduce the characters. The story is about Al Simmons, a Marine and a government assassin whose life comes to a sudden end. In a rash decision, he makes a pact with the devil to come back after he dies so he can profess his love to his wife. When he comes back, however; he has taken the form of a superpowerful Hellspawn. What follows is the psychological torment he faces as he tries to realize the new person that he has become.

The animation itself is nothing to write home about. It was animated and processed at Koko/Sheen Productions in Korea. Supervising director of *Spawn*, Eric Radomski, has said, "At times, the weakest part of the entire production is the animation." It's obviously very anime influenced with lots of close-up facial shots and limited movement. The effects are also very stylized with the blood that spills out of the characters looking like ketchup more than anything else. The character of Spawn is by far the most disappointing part of the whole production. Radomski says, "Spawn has a comic-book costume we barely show." The reason they barely show it is because it's too darn complicated for TV animation. McFarlane refused to simplify the character design for Spawn not realizing that animation is very different from comic books. The result is that Spawn is extremely hard to draw over and over and when we do see him, his cape looks extremely awkward and disorienting.

The rest of the visuals aren't that exciting either. The backgrounds are too dry and flat and don't evoke the necessary emotions to propel the story forward. Todd McFarlane

has said about the color styling, "It's really black, and it just gets blacker." This thinking leads back to a problem with the animated Batman where art directors think that to create a dark mood you need to fill the screen with black. The layout is also incredibly confusing with lots of overly artsy shots and bad cuts, although I suspect a lot of this confusion comes from poor editing. One of the few good points in terms of artwork was the use of heavy black shadows used on characters, which was influenced by the work of comic artists Alex Toth and Mike Mignola. This style gives the show a nice feel which could not have been achieved with regular inking.

The sound effects and music in *Spawn* are one of the highlights of the show. The show is mixed in Surround Sound and there are a lot of nice sounds to fill your speakers. The eerie and dark music is from *Batman* composer Shirley Walker who does a fine job creating a tense and dramatic score without intruding on the animation. The voice acting isn't bad either although you wish they had better dialogue to work with. *Spawn* is played by Keith David (Goliath in *Gargoyles*) while other voices include Richard Dysart (Cogliostro), Ronny Cox (Senator Scott McMillian), Michael Nicolosi (Violator), Dominique Jennings (Wanda Blake) Victory Love (Terry Fitzgerald and Bobby), James Keane (Sam Burke and Tony Twist), Michael McShane (Twitch Williams and Gareb), and John Rafter Lee as Jason Wynn.

The only ground-breaking thing about *Spawn* is the content of the show. Other than that, there is nothing extremely unique about it that makes it a great show. Obviously the show has a lot of potential to mature and settle down as the artists at HBO do the same. With twelve episodes already being produced and more possible, there's a lot to look forward to.
Amid Amidi

Daria MTV

I really wanted to like *Daria*, the new animated series on MTV that is a spin-off from *Beavis and Butthead*. The *Daria* character (one of a tragically hip, cynical teenager) first appeared on *B&B*, but Mike Judge has nothing to do with the series and it's easy to spot. *Beavis & Butthead* are the latest incarnation of the Katzenjammer Kids; the children whose hideous behavior justified whatever terrible things occurred to them.

While *Beavis & Butthead* are burlesque, *Daria* seems to aspire to being more than just amusing. In *Daria's* universe, everyone but her and her friend are hopeless geeks, *Daria* tries too hard to be about something, but that is undermined by the look of the show, its limited animation and annoying vocal performances. The premise that *Daria* and her



The Spawn from the new HBO series. ©HBO

cool friends are the only voices of reason in their high school universe wears out quickly. Why should I care about any of these characters? Frankly it's boring to see a character who is always in control and whose triumph in a situation is seldom in question. Of course Daria would remind me the show is not intended for 43 year-old men. **GMD**

Worst/ Best Television of the Year

The Worst

Oh, you think I have FUN with this, do you? Well, I hope you enjoy spending as little time on this section as I did.

1) *Street Sharks* (syndication, ABC)

Two for two! Two consecutive years of the most repulsive animation, the most banal scripts, the most souless personalities on television. As if the mere presence of this show in the new fall season wasn't enough, ABC had the gall to place it amongst the comparatively high standards of network animation, and Bohbot went as far as to put it on a daily schedule! Is there no end?

2) *B.A.D.* (UPN)

Boy, was it ever a cockfight between *B.A.D.* and *Street Sharks* for Worst Animated Show of 1996. Like its head-severed companion in crime, *B.A.D.* features some of the most thick-headed heroes and the most repulsive animation on television. This is the animated *X-Files* we've all feared.

3) *Eagle Riders* (syndication)

There's a certain appeal to nostalgia. This isn't it. Now I fully support a distributor/creative team's right to change character names, alter story arcs, fiddle with dialogue, and just plain screw with everything the original contained provided that the final product is at least WATCHABLE. Neglecting *Battle of the Planets* and the rest of the original *Gatchaman* series, *Eagle Riders'* dead dialogue, thin characters, and obnoxious camp level make it a disgrace in its own right.

4) *Mega Man* (syndication)

What is it with those crazy producers at Ruby-Spears anyway. They once talked about "survival" in the animation industry, and this is collaboration in the extreme. We're talking about some of the most infantile writing and dry-read voice acting in the industry here, for three years straight. Enough is enough. Just...die already!

5) *G.I. Joe: Extreme* (syndication)

If the debut season of *G.I. Joe* managed a smidgen of respectability, then this "closure season" of sorts can claim none. Those who

have memories of the original *G.I. Joe* series have already noted that the relative depth and appeal of those characters has been completely cut away this season, leaving behind only horribly drawn, atrociously animated, emotionally deprived shells of humans. Oh yeah, this is market-driven banality to the extreme.

Best of the Year

Yes, I lowered my standards again (remember when I used to give "A"s?). Yes, I shoved less-than-elite shows into this list. Hey, one has to admit that a little positivity, and I'll say that there was quite a bit of debate with myself as to what should go in the final two slots for the always-abbreviated "Best of the Year" list. No safe answers this year, either, though some may feel a bit skeptical about my selection this year (as they do every year, I know).

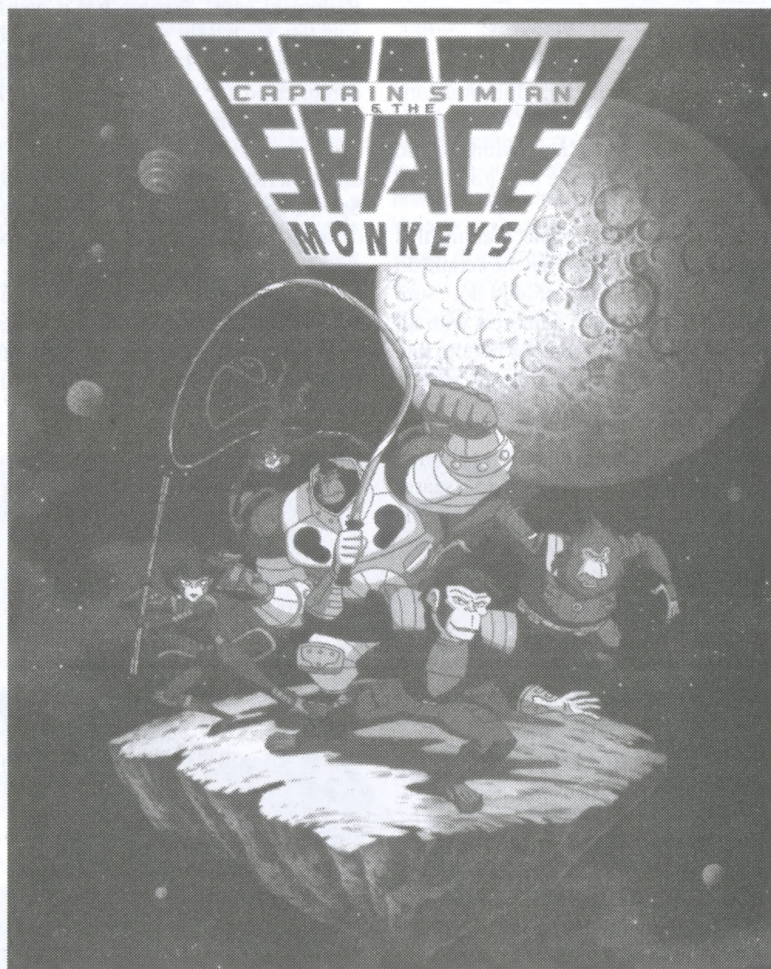
5) *Superman: the Animated Series* (WB)

After a slow start, I'm glad to know that the latest episodes have this show moving in

the right direction. I will admit that the art deco style (beautiful to behold in the film-noir style of *Batman: The Animated Series*) is inappropriate and rather plain for this full-color Supes, the animation approaches Batman's best, the writing has sharpened itself over the last few episodes, and the sheer excitement of the icon himself is still retained despite the more "human" treatment given his physical powers. Still a ways to go, but progress has definitely been made.

4) *Flash Gordon* (syndication)

Why is it that every year I do this thing, someone goes off and complains about one show that I put amongst the year's best. *Biker Mice from Mars* in '93, *WildCATS* in '94, *Littlest Pet Shop* in '95, and now someone's gonna wonder why this show deserves any credit. Your enjoyment of this show may depend upon whether or not you believe Letterman cronic Paul Schaeffer succeeds in voicing the insufferably pompous coward Dr. Zarkov; whether or not you believe the camaraderie of the Freedom Fighters is as fulfilling as the best throwaway dialogue;



Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys may have been a fan favorite, but it wasn't renewed for a second season.

whether or not you believe the Akom animation can be overlooked in the grand scheme of things. If you're a disbeliever, more power to you; God forbid I actually am having a good time this season.

3) *Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys* (syndication)

For a minute there, I wasn't about to give Gordon Bressack any credit for the success of *Mighty Max* (and I still kind of don't), but he and *Mighty Max* producer Rob Hundnut haven't let Max's loss quell their sense of wit and camaraderie. Few shows deserve as much praise as those that know they are performing a service to animation lovers everywhere by providing sophistication and old-fashioned fun to its audience.

2) *Teknoman* (UPN)

Last year, *Teknoman* was a good show. This year, the episodes of January and February were over-the-top, taking the show's concept and characters to emotional levels at which the first sixteen episodes were only hinting. Observe the results: Sabre crosses the well-defined line of supervillainy from the superegotistical foot soldier to the truly threatening egotist. Ringo evolves from the skilled-yet-untrusting hotshot to the skilled-AND-responsible hotshot. The relationship between Slade and Star is totally redefined avoiding the obligatory romance between guy and doll to a relationship based on (among other things) pity, mutual necessity, and...well... confessionals. Not your typical fringe network material.

1) *The Simpsons* (Fox & syndication)

Making a show like *The Simpsons* number one (or more generally, putting it on a list such as this) is based on the idea that this modern-day classic is on the same level as the company it keeps on this "Best of the Year" list. Unfortunately it is, in many ways, this season (as opposed to the often brilliant reruns currently airing in syndication) but one should never dwell on the negative when speaking of *The Simpsons*. *The Simpsons* still has its visual edge in terms of its directing. The writing still mixes an acid tongue with a high mind like no live-action program since *Picket Fences*. The characters still possess that surprising emotional hook that keeps us from being repelled by these otherwise objectionable folks. Satire has always been accused of being heartless and tasteless, and live-action comedies seem to be sinking into the robotics of the *Friends/Seinfeld* formula, but *The Simpsons* has always shown how comedy should be done, and I have a feeling it will continue to do so until the program becomes unprofitable. **Terrence Briggs**

On Tape

Space Jam Warner Bros. Home Video

There was a little girl who had a little curl deep in the middle of her forehead, when she was good she was very, very good and when she was bad she was horrid. You can say the same thing about *Space Jam*.

Yeah, the above paragraph is a cliché, To most people clichés are a sure sign of a tired mind and writers block. Old, tired, and depressing. That's what makes this film so wildly uneven.

This movie is a celebration of the cliché, from the saccharine faux cola commercial before the credits to about halfway through, when it finally gets really good, you can see everything coming from a mile away. When it comes to the seven minute theatrical 'toons that we love so well, it's okay. It's how the animators play with the standard plot, how they twist it around to create something new.

With the toon segments it works. When we see Bugs and Elmer for the first time, they're doing the same, damn thing, and that's fine, we expect that. What comes next advances the plot and flows seamlessly. But when Wayne (*Seinfeld*) Knight acts like a sniveling lackey who's told to follow Michael Jordan around; it's painful.

In fact until the toons start infecting the real people, the live action sequences are nearly unmatchable. It's too silly, too cliché.

But then the lackeys from the planet whutchamacallyt steal the talent from some of the New York Knicks and they start acting like...toons. It works! They hit their heads on door frames, get totally humiliated by little girls. Getting examined by maniacal psychiatrists is something which, in a regular movie would be infuriating and offensive, is hilarious. The same thing with Wayne Knight, when he sees a toon, he gets infected and the gags, which before were useless, become toonish and fun.

The media, including me, have been sneering at this film as a full length sneaker commercial. It isn't but it's close. It's a licensing commercial. Buy Michael Jordan and Loony Toons Sports crap!

While Mr. Jordan doesn't overtly look the viewer in the eye and say "buy my cologne", Bugs and Daffy do. The portal between the toon and people dimensions has a Warner Brothers consumer products logo on it. Daffy shows the logo on his butt and then kisses his own ass. Bugs and Daffy gripe to each other that they don't get a big enough cut on the profits (thereby implying that they definitely will from now on). The competition is publicly

dissed. "What kind of mickymouse outfit would name a team the DUCKS?" Bugs replies to a suggestion by Daffy. Talk about product placement!

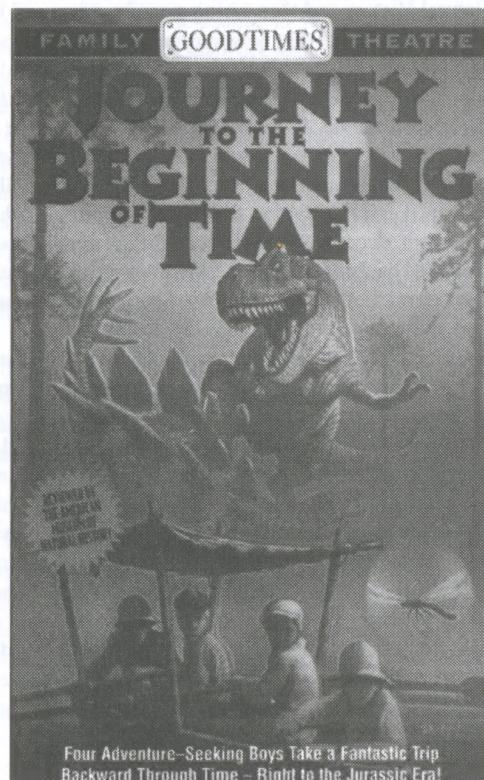
Sometime around the middle of the film it becomes obvious that animation directors Bruce Smith and Tony Cervone take over the film completely from Director-in-Name Joe Pytko and start romping.

The climax is wonderful. The only thing missing is the presence of Loony Toons nouveau characters. Pinky and the Brain and Dot Warner and her brothers would have been much better additions to the cast than the feminist Lola Bunny.

Smith and Cervone have more than acquitted themselves here. Bruce Smith is the highest ranking African American in the industry. This is his second feature. His first, *Bebe's Kids* was pretty good, very good as far as non-Disney features go. Compare *Bebe's Kids* to *Hyperman* or those awful *Fairy Tales Confiscated By the Revolution* on HBO. Exact same style. The biggest complement one can pay an animator is that everyone starts drawing like you.

Tony Cervone is making his directoral debut. He's been working as an animator on the Loony Toons nouveau series for years and was Chuck Jones' number two on *Carrotablanca*, which I didn't see 'cause I'm not paying eight dollars to just to see a seven minute cartoon. He knows the corporate style so well he can do it in his sleep.

When you see *Space Jam* on tape, fast



forward through the first ten minutes. It's better that way. **Eric Lurio**

Journey to the Beginning of Time Goodtimes Home Video

This sell-through offering from Goodtimes Home Video (regrettably recorded in the LP speed) is the only easily accessible film for American audiences by the talented and prolific Czech animator and director Karel Zeman, who will be the subject of a more in-depth article in an up-coming issue of **Animation Planet**, made a number of animated and live-action features from the mid-Fifties to the late Sixties. Although some of his films did see American theatrical release and some have been offered on home video, Zeman's work hasn't received the attention it so richly deserves.

Unlike other film makers who would use one form of animation for their production, Zeman combined a variety of animation techniques within a single film. Zeman combined cel animation with stop-motion model and paper cut-outs in order to get the effect he needed. His films, particularly his version of the Baron Munchausen legend and *The Mysterious World of Jules Verne*, are visually arresting.

Journey, however, is not pure Zeman. American producer William Cayton bought the rights to Zeman's 1954 film about a group of four boys who are literally rowing up a river through time and witnessing evolution. Cayton hired Fred Ladd to film a prologue which takes place in New York City which has the four boys visiting the American Museum of Natural History and then hiring a rowboat in Central Park. Once they row into a mysterious cave, they begin to go back through time.

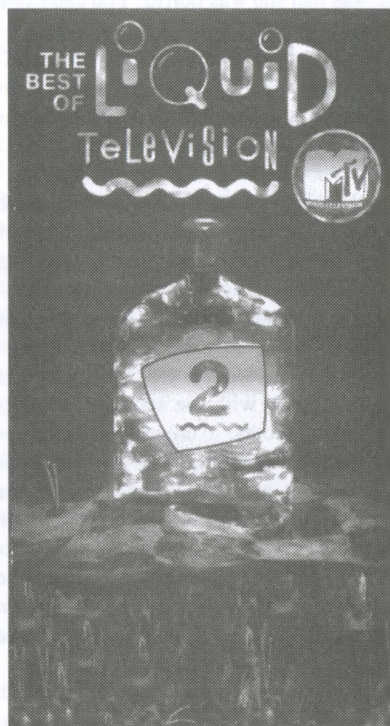
If the old *Boys' Life* Magazine had ever financed a movie, I imagine it would have looked a lot like this one. *Journey* is educational and imaginative, and it boasts the four most prepared, unflappable, dedicated young explorers ever to have been accidentally propelled back through time. No hysterics for these guys! For a rowing trip through Central Park, these kids come prepared with a complete camping rig. I'm not sure that was Zeman's original introduction, but the American version's set-up is unintentionally comical.

Once the viewer gets past the first act, Zeman's vision takes over. Zeman used stop motion animation, plus ingenious hand-puppets and cel animation to achieve his various prehistoric beasts. The final sequence of the film, at which the boys approach the literal creation of the world, seems to be tacked-on as its over-lapping colored light effects with a somber narration about God, doesn't match the style or tone of Zeman's footage.

The print used for the tape has some

noticeable scratches, but is acceptable. Despite its adulterated form, *Journey* is a film that should interest any stop motion fan. **GMD**

The Best of Liquid Television 2 Sony Music Entertainment/MTV



Liquid Television was a great experiment with fantastic successes and dismal failures. On this second tape there's quite an offering of both, and one thing you can't say is the program didn't offer a variety of animation and subject matter. The truly creepy *Billy and Bobby* are represented with two shorts, and the surrealistic *The Adventures of Thamas and Nardo* is also here. Unfortunately, the collection includes such wastes of time as *Art School Girls of Doom* and the evil puppet production *Winter Steele*. I think the enjoyable material outweighs the boring in this collection, though. **GMD**

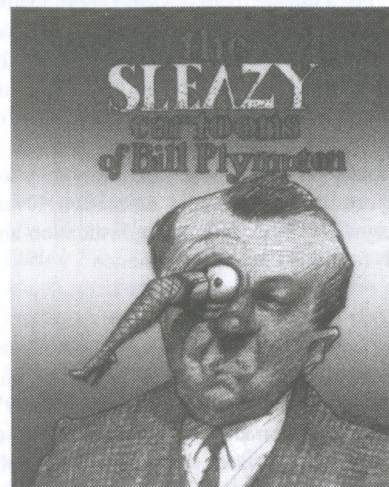
Computer Animation Classics Sony Music Entertainment

This collection of shorts, experiments, and television commercials all using computer animation shows just how far the medium has come in a relatively short period of time. Much of what's on this tape is, frankly, just demonstrations of form rather than actually short narratives. Granted many of these shorts are ten years old or older, but even with that understanding it's difficult to find real entertainment value here. Among the bright spots is *Pencil Test*, *Work's Ant* and *A Comic Zoom*, but those are just three out of 27 shorts. Viewed as a historical document this tape is

very interesting, but viewed as entertainment it begs for the fast forward button. **GMD**

Books

Sleazy Cartoons of Bill Plympton by Bill Plympton



Comic book and animation original art collectors occasionally catch their favorite cartoonists "with their pants down," so to speak, simply by looking at the back of their purchases. For there, on the reverse of the published comic book page or the animation or character sketch, one discovers art that was never intended for reproduction or the camera lens: nudes, off-color gags, or just plain dirty jokes sketched in the heat of a deadline-haunted night or dashed off for the amusement of their studio companions at the desks alongside.

These perverse peeks at the artists' "hidden life" can either inflate or deflate a fan's affection for their respective idols. That is a risk Bill Plympton fans will have to weigh for themselves before plunging into this self-published collection of comics Plympton eked a living out of for almost two decades.

Originally published in the pages of adult and porn zines such as *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Screw*, *High Society*, *Cheri*, *Knave*, *Hot Talk*, and *Adelina*, these one-to-two page strips showcase the seamier excesses of Plympton's distinctive imagination. They also provide an interesting context for Plympton's animation career, and a link with other comics creators of his generation. If you find their source material odious and have to wrestle with the content, though, you might do yourself a favor by avoiding the book altogether. It should come as no surprise, given the market Plympton was producing these strips for, that nudity, intercourse, sexism, misogyny, and gross objectifications and distortions of every conceivable organ and orifice of the human

body are par for the course here. Plympton's sensibilities continually stake out more surreal turf than the "good ol' boy" sex jokes his peers were grinding out, but this is still a collection calculated to outrage and offend.

In his introduction, Plympton refers to his 1968 move to New York City as the starting point for his freelance cartooning for a variety of adult magazines; a couple of the strips herein are only five years old, clearly reflecting Plympton's matured drawing skills. Chronologically, this links Plympton's early freelance career with contemporaries like Vaughn Bode and Stan Mack, providing a context never before apparent in Plympton's animation work. Bode, best known for Cheech Wizard, founded the men's magazines (primarily *Cavalier* and *Swank*, 1970–74) provided a profitable transitional niche for his work between the underground newspaper and comix and his later tenure in *National Lampoon*. It was there that the "Bode Broad" was enshrined, and the rare collaboration with fellow artists Berni Wrightson and Jeff Jones surfaced in the pages of Bode's *Deadbone Erotica*.

The link with Bode's work is tentative at best, identifying common ground in the adult zine comics between a comix icon and a neophyte animator; far more telling is the association with Stan Mack, who was a fixture of *National Lampoon* throughout the 1970s and the *Village Voice* in the 80s. The superficial similarities between Plympton's drawing style in the earlier strips reprinted in *Sleazy Cartoons* and Mack's *Lampoon* work which predates (and was contemporary with) Plympton's is self-evident, but the shared sense of caricature, pacing, and comedic exaggeration is even more striking. Indeed, a couple of Plympton's strips herein ("The Daily Bugle," "Jesus in America," the "Big Burt" strips, etc.) are worthy of anything Mack ever contributed to the *Lampoon*, while Plympton's gentler turns recall M. K. Brown's distinctive cartoons for *Lampoon*, with their uncanny wedding of domestic banality and fey surrealism. None of this detracts from Plympton's own unique style and approach, but finally recognizing these links is part of the fascination of this book.

Most of these gems date from 1979–81, what Plympton considers his "best sex toons," and they are a highly amusing crop. Anyone familiar with Plympton's animation will anticipate the amusingly grotesque anatomical distortions and casual cruelties (including autodismemberment, self-immolation, self-inflation and self-mutilation), but the bawdier erotic hijinks and rampant breast jokes may catch most fans offguard — a source, depending on your own disposition, of constant hilarity or intolerable irritation. Plympton continually pushes the envelope of the genre:

oversized breasts are a fixture of men's magazines, but only Plympton habitually embellishes them with painfully evident blue varicose veins, or dedicates two full pages to 100 tiny panels of every imaginable variable breast size, shape, and contortion. The breast fixation is balanced somewhat by the misadventures of a cowboy named Big Burt, whose pair of chaps harbor one good leg and an elephantine phallus to match. Plympton is fairly democratic in his exaggeration of both male and female characteristics, but that will hardly justify his gleeful excesses in the eyes of the prudish reader.

Aside from its value as an adult cartoon collection and retrospective of Plympton's pre-animation career, *Sleazy Cartoons* is of particular interest to **Animation Planet** readers for the strips that provide dry-runs for a few of his well-known animation works. *How To Kiss* (1981) provides a nine-panel blueprint for Plympton's riotous 1989 animated cartoon of the same name. Other precursors are less obvious: arguably, one-pagers like "Hair Styles" (1980?) and "Show Off" (1982) anticipated elements of Plympton's Academy Award nominated *Your Face* (1987), and "Hard to Please" (1992) extends the motif. Similarly, "Cool Move" (1981) and the undated "Famous Last Sights" are companions to *One of Those Days* (1988, my favorite Plympton "toon). More compelling are the characteristic elements of pacing, timing, and structure common to both his strips and animated works, as integral to Plympton's universe as his drawing style and rendering techniques.

All in all, *Sleazy Cartoons* certainly isn't everyone's cup of tea, but open-minded (and just plain dirty-minded) animation and comics fans will find this a worthy addition to their library. You'll just have to shelve it well out of children's reach. Plympton fans, of course, will have to make up their own minds. This collection will either make his work more endearing, or relegate Plympton to that circle in hell reserved for sexist cartoonists such as Tex Avery, Vaughn Bode, Sam Gross, and their ilk.

I guess I'll end up in an adjoining circle for enjoying this collection. I, for one, am glad Plympton saw fit to self-publish this kinky showcase, and look forward to any and all future efforts. **S.R. Bisette**

(The *Sleazy Cartoons of Bill Plympton* is available for \$15.00 postpaid from Plymptoons, Dept. AP, 107 West 25th St. #4B, New York, NY 10001, or by visiting his website at <http://found.cs.nyu.edu/plympton>)

Tex Avery: The MGM Years, 1942–1955
Turner Publishing, Inc.

In the early 1990s, word spread about two French art books dedicated to Tex Avery. I managed to get my hands on Patrick Brion's handsome *Les Dessins de Tex Avery* (Nathan Image, 1988), a lavish paperback showcasing character and animation sketches from Avery's MGM years. The other volume, *Tex Avery*, authored and assembled by Pierre Lambert (Demons & Merveilles, 1993), continued to elude me until this lavish American edition popped off of the bookstore shelves.

This is an exquisite oversized book, brimming with visual treasures: crystal-clear cel and frame reproductions, production sketches, character sheets, animation drawings, theatrical posters, etc. It is, without a doubt, the definitive volume on Avery's MGM years — one can only hope a companion volume dedicated to the rest of Avery's career, pre-and-post-MGM, will be published one day. My only pointed criticism of the American edition is the manner in which Lambert's essential role in this tome is shamefully played down. Lambert's "seminal work" is formally acknowledged with a paragraph following the contents page. His name should be prominent on the front cover, title page, and dust jacket flaps. These are instead dedicated entirely to Turner Publishing's canny marketing of the attendant text material enhancing Lambert's bible: foreword by William Hanna, introduction by Chuck Jones, and "text by John Canemaker."

Oh well. At least Tex Avery gets top billing.

I assume there's no need to introduce **Animation Planet** readers to Tex Avery's work. It is a tribute to Avery that, half a century later, his work continues to transcend their production-line origins. Like Walt Disney, Chuck Jones, and Hanna-Barbera, Avery has earned a stellar position in the pop-cultural pantheon of great animators, albeit a posthumous elevation. Unlike Disney and Hanna-Barbera, Avery did not buy his crown with the sweat of hired hands (though he worked with many animators and collaborators, Avery was as much a hired hand as they were) or the powerful mobilization of corporate publicity machines. As John Canemaker's remarkably concise, insightful, and ultimately heart-breaking biographical essay affirms, Avery earned his stature by bringing an absolutely unique perspective to the possibilities of animation and cinema, and successfully exposing and exploring those revelations while laboring in relative poverty and obscurity under the reign of petty tyrants in the studio cartoon plantations. As television usurped the era of the theatrical cartoon short, Avery was subsequently squeezed out of the narrow commercial avenues he had struggled within, ultimately channeling his waning creative

energies into Raid commercials and Hanna-Barbera fodder like *Kwicky Koala* (for those aware of Avery's situation, William Hanna's foreword eulogy is bittersweet, at best). Unlike Chuck Jones, Avery did not live to enjoy the public celebrity of his finest efforts.

Though Avery's legacy has long been acknowledged among animation aficionados and artisans, the American public's recognition of Avery's name and accomplishments has been slow coming. Joe Adamson's *Tex Avery: King of Cartoons* (1975) was the landmark effort, but it took the French reverence for Avery's work to initiate the current merchandising of Tex's legacy. That French *cineastes* would gravitate to Avery should come as no surprise: after all, the running jokes about the French love of Jerry Lewis movies obscures the fact that one of Lewis' formative directors, Frank Tashlin, was equally revered — and Tashlin, working as an animation director before entering live-action films, was one of Avery's associates and peers at Warner Brothers. Fortunately, the Turner monolith proceeded to exploit the possibilities, and a whole generation of kids are growing up with Tex Avery video collections, comic books, toys, figures, lamps, and postcards, with Avery's name as prominent a draw as Droopy's.

While one cannot help but be thankful for a book such as this one, not all the fruits of the Avery legacy have such integrity. The irony which I'm sure is completely lost on the corporate bureaucrats at Turner is the fact that their own contemporary Avery plantation exploits creators and craftsmen as rigorously as the studio system Avery labored under. The workmanlike maintenance and exploitation of the licensable trademarked Avery properties is inherently antithetical to the spirit, content, and kinetics of Avery's creations (having seen myself how first-rate freelance cartoonists ideally suited to the "Avery universe" were straight-jacketed by the licensing representatives while working on a recent Tex Avery comicbook series, I assure you this is not idle or mean-spirited conjecture on my part). Hence, Avery's true creative legacy will necessarily elude Turner's proprietary grasp, or that of any business entity seeking to harness such lightning in a bottle. The exploitation of Avery properties may have reached its most excruciating nadir with the announcement of an upcoming animated series starring the licensed caricature of Tex himself. One hopes Avery's family will somehow profit from the charade, while cringing at the very thought of it.

Avery's cartoons have left an indelible impression on generations, and definitively shaped not only the medium of animation, but the grammar, syntax, and plasticity of cinema as a whole. Canemaker notes the self-evident

extension of Avery's sensibilities in live-action/animation melanges like *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Babe*, and *The Mask*; surely, the prevalent "rubber realities" of contemporary mainstream cinema (Jim Carrey vehicles, the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, cyber sf thrillers like *The Lawnmower Man*, etc.) would not exist without Avery's influence, either. Canemaker also cites Avery's unfulfilled dream of extending his directorial passions into live-action features, quoting Avery's MGM storyman Heck Allen, who recalled Avery being "a frustrated live-action director," adding, "he would have been a great one." Frank Tashlin, who did make the jump to live-action direction by 1951, consistently maintained that, "of everyone there [at Warner Brothers animation department], I think Tex was the great innovator" (quoted from Mike Barrier's interview with Tashlin, Frank Tashlin, BFI/Editions Yellow Now, 1994, page 157). Given the prominence Tashlin achieved as an innovative comedy director, it is tempting to imagine, "what if...?" By gleefully demolishing every perceived parameter of "movie reality," Avery definitively shaped the future of animation and the medium of cinema. Thanks to directors like Robert Zemeckis, Joe Dante, Peter Jackson, Sam Raimi, and the French duo Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, we no longer have to imagine what modern cinema might have been like if Avery's career had embraced live-action features; these filmmakers, as much as animation directors like John Kricfalusi, are the true heirs to Avery's crown. Given the restrictive commercial avenues remaining for contemporary animation auteurs, one could even argue that live-action auteurs in the age of CGI have extended Avery's legacy with far greater success than animated shorts or features have: *Babe*, *Delicatessen*, *City of Lost Children*, *Death Becomes Her*, *Gremlins 2*, *Evil Dead 2*, and *The Frighteners* owe a far greater debt to Avery (and are a great deal more fun to experience) than soulless confections like *Cool World* and *Space Jam*.

This oversized coffeetable book is a necessary addition to every animation library, and an ideal companion to MGM/UA/Turner's laser disc boxed set *The Compleat Tex Avery*. Casual Avery fans, however, will find it a mixed blessing: the artwork and filmography are heaven-sent, but Canemaker's text may tell them far more than they ever cared to know about Avery's life and career. As Droopy would say, "Gruesome, isn't it?" If we must distance ourselves from the sometimes unpleasant realities of Tex Avery's life, times, and tribulations, how can we truly honor his memory, or honestly celebrate all that he did accomplish in his lifetime? Canemaker's essay may put a damper on the celebratory nature of

the package, but I for one applaud its presence here. The candor of the Avery bio is a breath of fresh air in an environment dominated by deceitful revisionist corporate-approved "histories" of Disney or (shudder) Hanna-Barbera.

As for the rest of the book — Avery's invention, energy, and imagery remain positively intoxicating.

As always, Tex leaves us laughing. S.R. Bissette

The Art of Hercules: The Chaos of Creation by Stephen Rebello

Disney's Art of Animation: From Mickey Mouse to Hercules

by Bob Thomas
Hyperion

Many "Making of..." and "Art of..." books are usually perfect additions to any coffee table, filled with stunning pictures and amusing, interesting anecdotes. Few, however, actually capture the spirit of the film itself, as well as its production. Some may take Stephen Rebello's *The Art of Hercules: The Chaos of Creation* as nothing more than one of these glorified marketing "tie-ins", but the book goes out of its way to prove that it's something more. With creative layout and humorous quotes, *Chaos of Creation*, gives the reader not only a sense of the hyperactive slapstick that is *Hercules*, but of the high level of talent that created all the craziness.

With Art of... books for Disney's *Pocahontas* and *Hunchback* under his belt, Rebello has become somewhat of a pro at setting up these massive publications. In *Hercules*, he wisely keeps grandiose exposition to a minimum, for the most part allowing lengthy quotes from filmmakers, artists and animators, along with art work from the film, to speak for themselves.

We hear from directors Ron Clements and John Musker, art director Andy Gaskill, animator Andreas Deja and Feature Animation President Peter Schneider just to name a few. Each quote is very insightful, providing just the right amount of comment on the art work and/or subject at hand.

For animation buffs, the quotes are a tasty pudding that will be quickly gobbled up. One perfect example is supervising animator Richard Bazley commenting on Hercules' directors: "Like Walt Disney did, they orchestrate animators to work together, which brings out the best in each artist."

Adding to the flow of *Art of Hercules* is an original layout that reflects the off-beat, contemporary humor of the film. Stills and drawings of the characters "comment" on the book's text - villain Hades looks at an early inspirational sketch of himself, saying, "Tkinda like him. Sorta captures the real me, don't you think?"

Such rarely seen inspirational art will also entice buffs, as will storyboards, rough animation drawings, backgrounds and character model sheets, all at huge, sometimes full page, size. Of course, there is a full chapter devoted to Gerald Scarfe's influence on the film (entitled "The Shock of the New"). Looking at the artist's grisly, broad style one wonders how it was ever whittled down to workable animated forms.

The only disappointment in Rebello's book is the brevity of its text; just as the reader is thirsting for more "making of" info, the quotes end.

This is where Bob Thomas' Disney's Art of Animation: From Mickey Mouse to Hercules makes a perfect companion piece. This third edition of Thomas' work expands on what was already a fascinating book, as the author has a great skill at conveying a tremendous amount of information in a small amount of text.

Art of Animation details Disney's days in the silent era, through the golden age of features, the troubled war years and the studio's comeback in the '50s. Thomas also tactfully handles the studio's darkest time, the two decades following Walt's death (with surprisingly frank quotes from many who were there).

The author then adds a jubilant tone to the Eisner-Katzenberg face-lift that brought the studio's hallmark animation out of the ashes of obscurity. Through it all we hear from everyone: Walt and his quieter, and, we discover equally important partner, brother Roy, legends such as Marc Davis, Frank and Ollie and current legends in the making such as Glen Keane and Andreas Deja.

The second half of the book details the making of *Hercules*. With less detail on art than Rebello's book, Thomas gives insight into every stage of production from inception through finished product, providing biographical and career details from all involved.

What's most wonderful about Disney's Art of Animation is how Thomas seemingly thumbs his nose at those who try to chop Disney up into "good and bad years" (a nail is seemingly placed in the coffin of the well-worn "don't make 'em like they used to" statement). Instead, the author allows many of the more recent Disney efforts to pay homage to the studio's classics.

More importantly, both of the *Hercules* books celebrates both the blood, sweat and ink that is the unique art form of animation and the studio that continues to lead the way.
Mike Lyons

Walt Disney's Bambi: The Sketchbook Series
Hyperion



If you're a serious Disney fan, and love to investigate the creative process, this book may be of great interest to you. This volume collects page after page of the pencil drawings used to develop the characters and animation of what many people believe was the most beautiful of the animated films produced by Walt Disney. Featuring the work of legendary animators Marc Davis, Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, Milt Kahl and Eric Larson, the book is an under-stated tribute to the animator's art.

I wish the book had some commentary in it on the creation of the artwork it so reverently presents. Since a number of the contributing animators are still alive, it would have been appropriate for interviews to have been included. **GMD**

Mouse Under Glass: Secrets of Disney Animation and Theme Parks
by David Koenig
Bonaventure Press

Gimme dirt! Yeah! Dirt! Whenever I see a title like the one above, I assume I'm going to get some startling insights or smutty little tidbits about the great god of animation Walt Disney. Well, this book is way too high-toned to satisfy my dark needs. Mouse Under Glass

is a respectful and fairly thorough look at the making of most of the Disney animated feature films.

Koenig has chapters on each of the Disney features (but doesn't include any of the anthology films) right up to *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. He doesn't mention the Disney shorts or their impact on the studio's success, nor does his book have any illustrations from the films as this volume is not authorized by Disney Inc. Each chapter deals with story development, plot holes, bloopers, "strange" reactions and theme park tie-ins. Although he lacks any illustrations from the films he examines, his book is bolstered by a number of interviews with Disney animators, writers, and composers.

Koenig has concentrated on the story development of the films he examines, and that is the strength of this book. Whether he compares the original story or discusses various revisions, Koenig is correct in emphasizing the importance of the story development as that was a hallmark of the Disney creative process. Although he makes some statements that aren't true (Max Fleischer was not "notorious" for slipping X-rated shots of Betty Boop into his cartoons,

despite what Koenig alleges) and some curious omissions (he never mentions the use of popular singers and composers for *Oliver & Co.*), Koenig's biggest mis-step was the clumsy inclusion of material on the Disney theme parks and rides. Frankly, aside from a group of theme parks fanatics, few Disney film fans, I'm willing to hazard, care whether or not a hit film inspired a ride. While the merchandising efforts of the Disney Studio do have impact on film fans, I can't see anyone really caring whether or not there is a Hunchback ride at Disney World. GMD

Popeye Le Marin
Dreamland éditeur
by Fred Grandinetti

This is the French language version of Fred Grandinetti's very complete look at the career of Popeye the Sailor that was published

Takkyubin or "The Witch's Delivery Service")

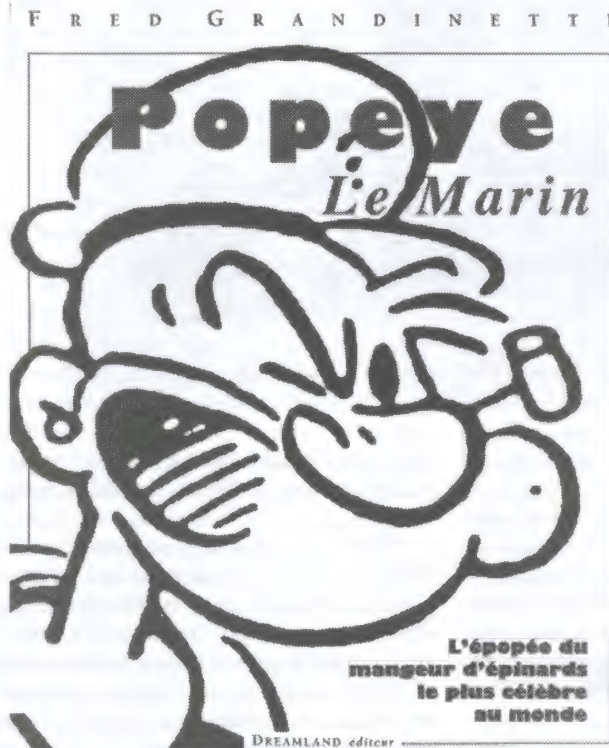
Over the past sixty or so years, Disney has held sway in the arena of animation in the United States. While other studios in recent years (i.e. Don Bluth/Fox, Amblin, Richard Rich) have attempted to play catch up, Disney has remained in the public eye as the epitome of animated film-making world-wide. As their competitors attempt to capture the "Disney Magic" as so many have tried to do over the many years Disney animation has been in existence, Disney simply DOES it. So it must have come as a surprise to some when Disney purchased distribution rights to Studio Ghibli animation, considered by many the epitome of animation in Asia. However, this move is perhaps very good business-sense, because the films by Studio Ghibli are some of the most marketable commodities in animation history.

One of the best examples of the extraordinary animation from this studio is *Kiki's Delivery Service*, which is said to be slated for release in the US sometime in autumn 1997. This film is about a thirteen year-old witch named Kiki, who goes out on her own for the first time with her black cat "Jiji" to further her witch's training (this is also necessary to show she can make a living, since witches have become more entrepreneurial nowadays). She soon arrives in the city of "Calico", where she initially runs into problems with traffic laws (flying her broom on the wrong side

coming-of-age story, involving episodes where Kiki must tackle typical problems we all face at some point in our lives. She undergoes a wide range of emotional responses to difficult situations and misunderstandings. At one point, Kiki's ability to fly becomes almost non-existent, and she loses confidence in herself. However, she learns from an artist friend named Ursula that everyone experiences times when they are down, and she needs to always believe in herself, regardless of how bad things are going at a given moment. There are times when all of us lose our ability to "fly", and the truths this film expresses are ones we all should be reminded of sometimes.

In every way, this film should be considered a masterpiece. The animation itself was the best Director Hayao Miyazaki had done to the point in which *Kiki* was made (1989), and Miyazaki's high reputation was set a decade earlier with the film *Cagliostro Castle*. *Kiki* is a first for Miyazaki, in that he didn't write the story for the screenplay, but based it upon an award-winning children's book by Eiko Kadono (*Majo no Takkyubin - "The Witch's Delivery Service"*). Depicting flight is a Miyazaki specialty, and *Kiki's Delivery Service* contains many of his finest aerial sequences. The backdrop of "Calico" is special, in that it is said to be a mixture of Scandinavian, German, and Italian influence, with even a bit of San Francisco thrown in. Jo Hisaishi (Miyazaki's favorite musician) composed the musical score for *Kiki*, which is certainly another high-point of this film.

There is nothing flashy about *Kiki*. No one sings songs or performs elaborate dance numbers. Some have even criticized *Kiki* for its lack of action and an antagonist. However, the simplicity of the storytelling, matched with wonderful characters and masterful direction makes it a winner (the highest grossing animated film in Japan in 1989). Hopefully, Disney will succeed in marketing



by McFarland & Company in 1994. My high school French is very rusty, so while I can't comment on Fred's prose (see that McFarland volume), I can say this is a beautifully designed trade paperback that takes full advantage of Fred's huge collection of Popeye archival material. Fred covers it all from the development of the comic strip to the Fleischer and Famous Popeyes to the two Hanna-Barbera incarnations. For the first time in a long time I wish I could remember more of my high school French than "Ou est la bibliothèque?"

GMD
 Anime

of the street and nearly causing an accident), but soon finds lodging with a family running a bakery. Here, she decides to operate an aerial delivery service, since she is more adept at flying than anything else, and she isn't very talented at THAT either.

For the most part, this is a



Kiki's Delivery Service (a.k.a. *Majo no*

Kiki's Delivery Service and in handling the English dubbing of it. Then perhaps Disney's rivals will see that one does not need to copy in order to be successful. Hayao Miyazaki's originality should be a beacon to the entire animation industry.

Next issue, I will review another Disney/Studio Ghibli release: *Laputa - Castle in the Sky* - **John Beam**

Macross Plus, Volume 2 and 3
Manga Entertainment
Dubbed, Color

The beginning moments of *Macross Plus Volume 2* arrest the attention with a kaleidoscopic, hypnotic, sensual and emotionally evocative 3D concert scene. Once ensnared by the breath-taking and shamelessly fawning tribute seemingly created by and for



© Manga Entertainment

reverent music video disciples, you will be hooked. Lavish attention to detail (such as beautifully created visions of reflective surfaces and layering that creates realistic depth) seduces the eye and holds one's attention in an iron grip even when the plot is overly subtle.

This is a cleverly written story about the rivalry of two test pilots (formerly school chums) revolving around a beautiful but emotionally wrought woman and knitted seamlessly with sub-plots involving a manipulative and crooked Colonel and the emerging intelligence of the sinister grand-scale entertainment program, Sharon Apple.

The plot is subtly executed with very little adult language and mere hints of adult situations, making this particular volume suitable for children. The story, though, is so delicately woven that only a mature mind will appreciate its satisfying meatiness. This is the rare gem that gets better and better each time one watches it.

Just as Volume 2 ended in a violent and catastrophic cliffhanger, Volume 3 opens in a hospital room where hot-headed test pilot Isamu Dysun is recovering with his recalcitrant lady love Myung Lane hovering near him. The rivalry between Guld Bowman and Dysun reaches a satisfying physical crescendo and the plot simmers with the spices of jealousy, intrigue, and more crooked politicking in the upper echelons of the pilot training center.

The action is at a minimum in this episode with the creators being more concerned with straight forward plot clarification and further developing personal relationships. Some witty dialogue rescues the episode from inundating itself in unnecessary seriousness. Unlike the provisos volume, this tape frugally saves its innovative eye candy animation until the end of the episode. Manga certainly has mastered

t h e
 technique
 o f
 combining
 i t b e s t
 animation
 sequences
 w i t h
 plaintive
 piercing
 music with
 the result
 being an
 emotional
 evocation
 that occurs
 so rarely in
 animated
 f i l m s .
 A d u l t
 language,

nudity and violence are minimal (except for a questionable shooting scene) . I have high hopes for this series; if it manages to keep from evolving into a parody of itself, I'll be hooked. **Brenda Ainsberg**

Armored Trooper Votoms, Stage 2,
Volume 1
U.S. Manga Corps Release, USM 1482
Subtitled, Color, Stereo, 72 minutes
Unrated, Contains Violence

I am totally confused by this title. I mean, nothing going on in the three episodes contained in this tape make ANY sense whatsoever. *Armored Trooper Votoms* is supposed to be an anime "classic", but perhaps any anime title over ten years old is considered a classic by some people.

If I had been able to pick up any reasonable motives or understandable character development, then perhaps I would have been able to look past the numerous plot inconsistencies and the horrible animation.



© U.S. Manga Corps

VOTOMS Stage2, Volume 1 begins with a recap of stage 1, entitled "Fyana." From what I was able to gather from this episode, a mercenary named Cherico Cuvie is fighting in a war for the sole purpose finding a woman he loves. However, this person (who Cherico mysteriously refers to as "Fyana") is also a PS, or "Perfect Soldier", and she is out to kill him! For all intents and purposes, that is just about ALL these episodes are about. The people Cherico fights for are all suspicious of him, and he always ends each episode fighting against the person he's in love with (the other episodes are entitled "Assemble EX-10" and "Doubts").

I'm sorry if I am stepping on the toes of fans of this title, and I admittedly am not very informed about it, but I felt there was nothing here that would make me want to go out and purchase any more of this rather long series. Seeing how VOTOMS came out in 1983 (produced by Sunrise, Inc. - the same company which produced *Crusher Joe* and *Dirty Pair*), one might forgive the stilted animation and dated mechanical designs. However, the first Macross series was also being aired at the same time, and it makes VOTOMS look very poor in comparison indeed. I do not usually harp on the motion from an animated television program, but the animation and designs are poor, even by these standards. Story-wise, the same characters are miraculously reunited from the first "stage" of the story, and none of these people made me want to care about any of them. The whole appearance of the presentation is very flat and very painful to

watch.

There is one last thing I would like to talk about concerning this title. I was rather offended by the very casual attitude I saw with VOTOMS in regard to war. Cherico fought so he could find this woman who wanted to kill him, and perhaps someone might find this romantic. However, there is nothing romantic or glamorous about warfare. War is brutal and soul-eroding. This more than anything else (and there is so much not to like about VOTOMS) made me reject this title. Get it at your own risk.

(Recommended alternative titles: *Gall Force*, *Bubblegum Crisis*, and *The Venus Wars*) **John Beam**

Neon Genesis Evangelion: Genesis 0:1
AD Vision Films Release, VHSEV/001S
Subtitled, Color, VHS Hi-Fi Stereo, 60 minutes

Contains violence and mature situations

Approximately twelve years before *Neon Genesis Evangelion* first aired on Japanese television in 1995, the group which created it: animation fans, science fiction writers, and artists, formed Gainax, and changed the face of Japanese animation. Their first project, the animated feature *Wings of Honneamise* (1987), launched these animation rebels into worldwide prominence, and with such outstanding series as *Aim for the Top!*, *Gunbuster*, *Nadia of the Mysterious Seas*, and *Otaku No Video*, their prominence has never wavered. With *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, the group at Gainax have totally outdone themselves.

As with many Japanese animated tales, it is set in the near-future, and involves alien invaders threatening the existence of mankind. In the year 2000, just fifteen years prior to the events covered in the first two episodes, a strange being lands in Antarctica, and without warning it self-destructs, melting the ice cap, throwing the Earth off its axis, and wiping out half of humanity. Ironically, certain children are born nine months after this event who are endowed with the talents necessary to save the human race from extinction.

Now, it is the year 2015, and these strange beings (referred to as "Angels") have returned. Angels are enormous, hideously ugly creatures, who protect themselves with "Absolute Terror" (or AT) fields, which deflect any conventional or thermonuclear attacks against them. Besides this, they are also capable of summoning energy weapons that wield incredible destructive power. To combat this threat, a special UN agency called NERV was formed, and using knowledge that was gathered from the earlier Angel appearance, they have created "Evas", enormous bio-mechanical humanoid weapons. It just so happens that the children mentioned earlier,

now exactly fifteen years-old, can link telepathically with the Evas, and are chosen to pilot these weapons and fight for the salvation of all mankind.

If I were simply going to comment on the story alone (as much as I have been able to gather), I would say I am fascinated with it. However, there is SO much more to this Japanese television presentation. The characters are well developed, the character and mechanical designs are handsome, and the animation is incredible. Two original Gainax staff members, Hideaki Anno (Screenplay/Storyboards, Mecha Designs, and Series Director), and Yoshiyuki Sadamoto (Character Designs) have contributed to nearly every Gainax project, and their assistance to Project Eva/Neon Genesis Evangelion was certainly essential to its success. Despite the fact I have only seen the earliest episodes, *Evangelion* is the best animated television series I have ever seen. It is definitely a series I will follow to the very end. **John Beam**

Urusei Yatsura TV Series 12

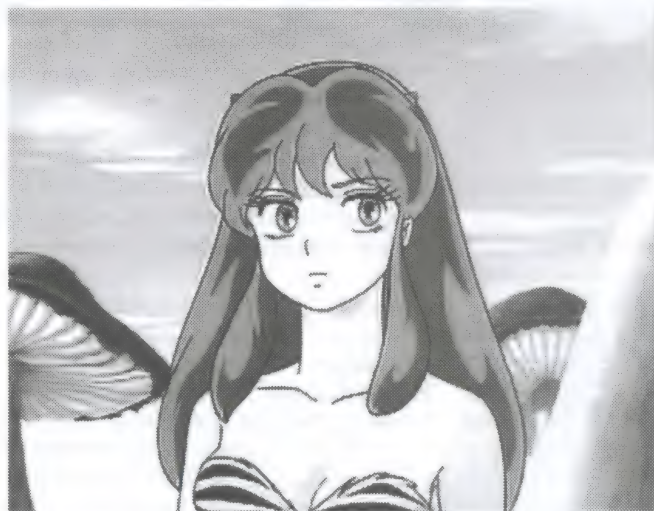
(Episodes 43-46)

AnimEigo/AT092-110

Subtitled, Color, Mono HI-FI, 100 Minutes

Contains brief nudity & adult situations

For those of you unaware of what *Urusei Yatsura* (*Those Obnoxious Aliens*) is about, I shall be brief in describing the odd goings-on. Ataru Moroboshi, the unluckiest lech in the universe, manages to win a game of tag with Lum, a demon princess, whose minions would have repossessed the Earth if Ataru had lost.



© AnimEigo

However, Lum misunderstands Ataru's cry "Now I can get married!" (his semi-girlfriend, Shinobu, promised to marry him if he actually won), and takes it as a proposal to her. Now, poor Ataru must endure having a beautiful girl (in a tiger-stripped bikini, green hair, and horns) living in his bedroom closet. Oh yeah,

Lum also electrocutes Ataru whenever his eyes stray toward another girl!

Episode 43 (*The Terror of Meow*) chronicles the account of a poor girl named Mizuzu, whose cat Yuki takes over her body, and she is cursed to wander the Earth part-girl, part-cat. However, the demented Buddhist monk Cherry finds a way to exorcise the cat's spirit, and change Mizuzu back to her true form. This involves Ataru making a complete idiot of himself, which is something Ataru is very capable of doing. In episode 44 (*After You've Gone*), Ataru tells Lum that he doesn't want her around anymore, and he soon finds himself alone, with only a cute stuffed doll resembling Lum left on his dresser. Now Ataru is in complete turmoil, because he discovers he is just as hung up on Lum as she is on him! This episode was polled by fans in Japan as being the most popular in the whole series.

There may not be another episode in UY as totally strange as #45 (*Lum's Class Reunion*). Nearly every character involved in this series is bizarre, and ALL of them descend upon Tomobiki High School for an alien's class reunion. Interesting, but VERY strange! The final episode on this tape literally ends things with a bang. With "Lunchtime Eat-Out'ers, Gather Around!", all the students of Tomobiki High wage war on the faculty, to fight the rule against students eating lunches off school grounds. Lots of weirdness, anime cameos (watch for "The Mach 5's" appearance), and fun in this one.

Mamoru Oshii is best known for directing more serious titles, such as the *Patlabor* series and *Ghost in the Shell*, but he shows with *Urusei Yatsura* that he can handle wacky comedy rather deftly. The stories are based upon Rumiko Takahashi's world-famous manga (comic book), and many believe UY is her best work. I will admit that this anime is not for everyone (people who do not handle odd behavior well, STAY WAY!), but even the lamest episodes are at least interesting, and the best ones are outstanding. **John Beam**

Blue Seed, Volume 1

AD Visions Films Release/VHSBS/001S

Continued on Page 55

FAMILIAR VOICES: CASEY KASEM

The host of the radio's highly successful Casey's Top 40 has been a busy actor in Saturday morning animation.

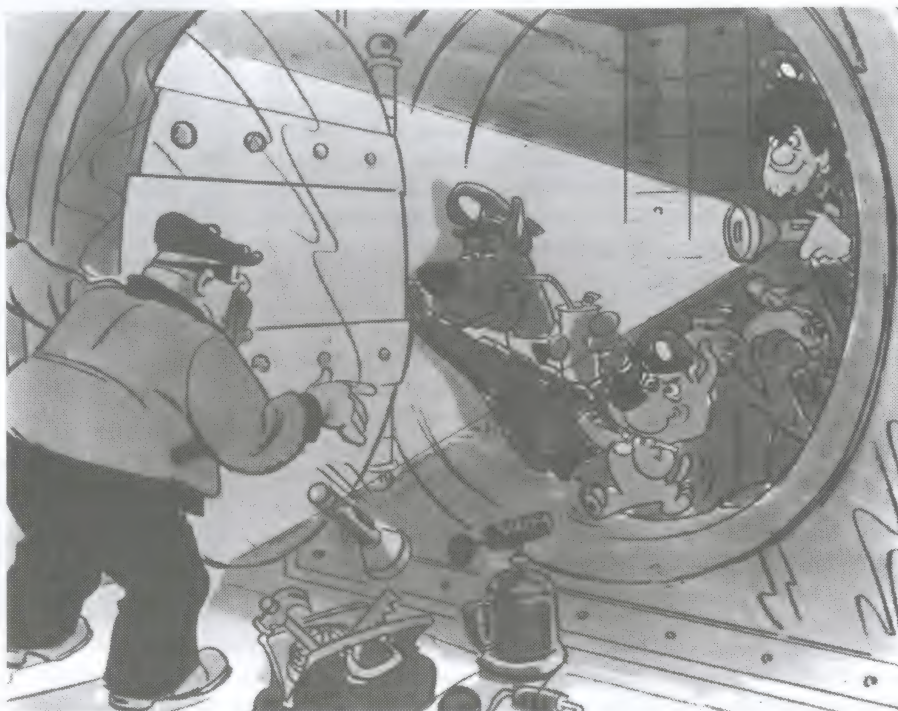
by Chuck Miller

He was Batman's sidekick, Scooby's master, Josie and the Pussycats' manager and G-Force's leader. And in between his career in broadcasting and his attempts to increase public acceptance of tolerance and peace, Casey Kasem became part of the Saturday morning cartoon spectrum. At one time, he could be heard on as many as ten different children's shows, between guest star appearances and supporting character roles.

Born in 1932, Kemal Amen Kasem grew up in a working class Detroit neighborhood (because he loved baseball, he used the nickname "Casey" because it sounded like the name a shortstop would have). At night he would listen to the stories his father told about growing up in the Shouf Mountains of Lebanon. Before long, Casey became a storyteller, just like his father.

Casey Kasem's voice career actually predates Saturday morning television animation. In 1946, while attending high school, he won a voice and diction contest whose grand prize was an appearance on a radio drama show. "It wasn't until I got out of high school, that I suggested to George Shapiro, the speech and English teacher at school, that I would like to volunteer my services and be an intern in the summer of 1950 at WDTR, the Detroit public school station. I became the chief sound effects man and wrote some scripts, but did very little acting."

During his stint at WDTR, he became fast friends with another broadcaster, Don Bustany (who later became his partner in the American Top 40 radio show). "Don suggested when I enrolled in Wayne State University, I should audition for the flagship radio show at Wayne State, and that was *Scoop Ryan, Cub Reporter*, who traveled around the world solving mysteries and getting good stories. I auditioned and got the part. After a while, the station felt sorry that I was working all summer and not making any money. So they offered me a \$5 a morning job, as an usher on a show called *Quiz Down* at the local ABC radio station. 5th and 6th grade pupils appeared on the quiz show and received a radio as a prize. One day I suggested to an engineer at *Quiz Down* that we listen to *Scoop Ryan* on WJR. He listened, and he said, 'You're very good,



Scooby, Scrappy and Shaggy foil another bad guy. (© Hanna-Barbera)

and they're looking for a new person to play Dan Reid, the Lone Ranger's nephew."

So while attending classes at Wayne State University, and participating in shows at Wayne State's Radio Club, Kasem also acted on radio shows like *The Lone Ranger*, *Sgt. Preston of the Yukon*, and *Bob Barkley, American Agent*, three shows recorded in Detroit for the ABC radio network. Even when he was drafted and served in the Korean War, Kasem kept honing his broadcasting skills, as he created a nine-station radio network of drama and comedy shows for his fellow servicemen.

The microphone would take Casey from Wayne State to cities like Buffalo, Cleveland, Oakland and Los Angeles. By 1967, Casey had one of the most popular music shows on Los Angeles radio, mixing trivia, dedications and other musical nuggets together on car radios throughout Southern California. He even starred in motion pictures like *The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant* and *The Cycle Savages*, pictures destined for visits from Crow and Tom Servo. But those acting jobs got him another break - this time as a cartoon voiceover actor.

In 1967, Filmation's *Superman/Batman*

Hour premiered on CBS. The series had all the Filmation trademarks - limited animation, reused poses and movements, overbearing recycled background music - but it was a success. Casey was Robin, the Boy Wonder to Olan Soule's Caped Crusader. "We did 75 shows, and right after that, everything just clicked. Within three months, my agent told me I was the most sought-after voiceover actor in town. All the other characters on the Batman series - with few exceptions - were played by Ted Knight. He was brilliant. He could do Mr. Freeze and the Joker, and he also was Alfred the butler, and even the narrator. I used to say to him, Would you like me to help out with a couple of characters?' He would tell me, What are you trying to do, horn in on me, Casey?' He had a lot of that character from the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* in him."

When Batman and Robin moved to Hanna-Barbera as part of ABC's successful *Super Friends* series, he remained as Robin's voice until 1986 (Burt Ward, Robin from the 1960's *Batman* TV show, reprised his role in a Filmation-produced *Adventures of Batman* in the 1970's, while Loren Lister played Robin in Fox's *Batman - The Animated Series*).

Meanwhile, Casey provided his voice

for more animated programs. He became Alexander Cabot III, the peripatetic road manager of *Josie and the Pussycats*; he became Mark, the jut-jawed squad leader of *Battle of the Planets*; he sang in the Rankin-Bass special *Here Comes Peter Cottontail*; he played everything from race car drivers in *Hot Wheels* to airplane pilots in *Sky Hawks*; from a singing kitty cat in *The Chattanooga Cats* to an Autobot named Cliffjumper in *Transformers*.

But his most prominent voice role was that of Shaggy Rogers, the extremely excitable member of a teenage crime-solving team in *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?* Between 1968 and 1990, Kasem provided Shaggy's voice in over 250 episodes. Eating pizzas and Scooby Snacks, screaming "Zoiks!" in a Bob Clampett-like doubletake, and finally catching the bad guy (after running away from him most of the episode), the *Scooby-Doo* series became Hanna-Barbera's longest running franchise.

At one point, during the *Scooby-Doo* permutation *The New Scooby-Doo Comedy Movies*, Scooby and Shaggy interacted with guest stars from Hollywood and the animated world - including Batman and Robin (in "The Dynamic Scooby-Doo Affair" and "The Caped Crusader Caper") and *Josie and the Pussycats* (in "Haunted Showboat,") meaning Casey was voicing two main characters on the same show. "Alex's voice was pretty close to Shaggy. Alex was Shaggy without the whine. And an attitude difference. Alex was a tough guy, the tough business manager of the band. And of course he was always getting into scraps with his sister."

Since the early 1970's, Casey has been a vegetarian. By the 1980's, in a decision of conscience, he refused to do any more commercials for fast food places, grocery stores, or any place selling meat, fish, poultry or dairy products. "At Hanna-Barbera, I asked the director at the time if it would be possible to quietly make Shaggy and Scooby vegetarians in the series. The director of the shows at that time, Gordon Hunt, Helen Hunt's father, said, 'Sure Casey, we can do that.' So when Scooby and Shaggy had a pizza, instead of pepperoni, they would put vegetables on it. Instead of a hamburger, they would have an elaborate peanut butter and jelly sandwich."

The only time Casey didn't provide Shaggy's voice was when Hanna-Barbera licensed a series of *Scooby-Doo* toys for a Burger King promotion, and needed Shaggy and Scooby for tie-in commercials. "I said I couldn't do it. It was against my conscience to promote something that I myself wouldn't eat. So I told Hanna-Barbera I couldn't do it. They were willing to understand, after playing Shaggy for all those 300 shows and a couple of movies, that I turned them down on one

commercial."

By 1979, the major Saturday morning cartoon studios - Hanna-Barbera, DePatie-Freleng, Filmation and Rankin-Bass - found themselves in the middle of a work stoppage. Voice actors went on strike to protest wage inequities - should a voice actor get paid the same rate if he does one character or three - and Casey Kasem marched the picket line alongside his compatriots. "I marched in front of Hanna-Barbera at that time. It was a part of a strike - more like a protest. Hanna-Barbera had always been very good to their actors, really treated the actors royally. But it had to do with how many

parts you played on one show. Whether you got more money to play more parts. It was solved, and as I say, I hated to picket Hanna-Barbera, because they had always been so good to us."

One of Casey's strongest concerns is the portrayal of Arabs on television, in the movies and in cartoons - specifically, promoting positive Arab characters rather than insulting stereotypes. He has written *Broadway Video*, the distributors of the old Rankin-Bass *Little Drummer Boy* Christmas special, to remove the special from distribution because of the unflattering Arab stereotypical characters. After Walt Disney released the film *Aladdin*, Casey sent letters to the studio pointing out some serious incongruities - *Aladdin* and Jasmine looked more European than Arabic, while almost everybody else was drawn with beady eyes, a long mustache and goatee; the opening song described Arabs as cutthroats and mutilators, etc. Disney did change some of the more offensive song lyrics when *Aladdin* went to the home video market, and the *Aladdin* television series has shown a wider spectrum of Arab characters. "I felt they were defaming Arabs. We had success with the Disney cartoon and television people, but the motion picture division made some movies that were pretty obnoxious. *Father of the Bride 2* had a stereotypical Arab, for example. I think the TV people stayed by the Disney principle. All



we ask is for people to be sensitive to vilifying Arabs in their shows."

Casey doesn't do too many cartoons these days. He spends most of his days as host of three of the top syndicated radio shows on the air - *Casey's Top 40*, *Casey's Countdown* and *Casey's Hot 20*. He also spends time with political causes, activism and protests of conscience - since 1982, he has been an outspoken critic of the United States' foreign policy in the Middle East, especially the Army's invasion of Lebanon and the shelling of the Shouf Mountains, from where Kasem's father emigrated. "I think that because of what Hollywood has done to the image of Arabs and Muslims for over 70 years, that people in this country have a poor image of what Arabs are," he said in a 1991 *Culture Concrete* interview. "[Arabs have] been vilified and denigrated in television and in motion pictures, in cartoons, for so many years that it's become second nature for people to think of Arabs as something less than human. Through the years, Hollywood has created in the minds of Americans the line of an Arab being either a billionaire, a bomber or a belly dancer."

And when he has auditioned for shows, many of the scripts have been lacking. "Recently I've turned down some shows that I thought were sexist or violent, one show was too violent, another show I didn't particularly

care for some of the dialogue in the cartoon, it was mean-spirited, and I felt uncomfortable doing it. I found things in a script that I've asked them to change, and most of the time the people will change it. Occasionally, they haven't called me back, but that's okay. After doing 2000 of them, I certainly had my share of cartoons, I love cartoon shows, I would do them every day, except I have a 6-year old daughter, and I spend a lot of time trying to do what I can in the areas of social causes, humanitarianism and political activism. As much as I love to do cartoons, I don't have much time to audition any more."

Even some of the programs Casey was involved with - like *Battle of the Planets*, for example - have been reborn, with less than pleasing results. "We did 100 shows there, and that was a show that came out of Japan, they took out all the violence from the show, and they replaced all of the violence with 7-Zark-7, a speaking computer at the beginning and end of the show. And Alan Young [*Ducktales*] played that. With this new show, Keye Luke was in it, as well as Janet Waldo and Alan Dinehart. And I'll bet you in this new version (Saban's *Eagle Riders*), they're using all the violence that was taken out before."

But he hasn't given up on his characters completely. His most recent cartoon work was a series of promos for the Cartoon Network, including one where Shaggy and Droopy cruise Los Angeles a la *Pulp Fiction*. Do they discuss what a Quarter Pounder with cheese is called in France? Nope, more like what they call Pound Puppies in Paris or Smurfs in Spain.

"I think - with regard to cartoons, I'm just happy I was able to be a part of the work that's being done on cartoon shows and have worked with the superstars of cartoons, like Mel Blanc and Don Messick and some of the other big names. I'm just delighted that I had a chance to work with them. I always tried to put principle before profit in what I've done as a disc jockey, and as a voiceover artist in cartoon shows. When I felt that something didn't sit well with me, that I felt was offensive, rather than just accept it, I was outspoken. We all made a lot of mistakes in our life. Who's going to cast the first stone? I choose to be non-judgmental, but when I can make a difference, I don't let the idea of making money stand in my way."

CASEY KASEM'S CARTOON VOXOGRAPHY

Robin, the Boy Wonder:

The Batman/Superman Hour; 1968; CBS; Filmation

Adventures of Batman; 1969; CBS; Filmation

Super Friends; 1973; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

All-New Superfriends Hour; 1977; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Challenge of the Super Friends; 1978; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Super Friends: The Legendary Super Powers Show; 1984; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Super Powers Team: Galactic Guardians; 1985; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Shaggy Rogers:

Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?; 1969; CBS; Hanna-Barbera

The New Scooby-Doo Comedy Movies; 1972; CBS; Hanna-Barbera

Scooby-Doo/Dynomutt Hour; 1976; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Scooby's All-Star Laff-A-Lympics; 1977; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Scooby and Scrappy-Doo; 1979; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

The Richie Rich/Scooby-Doo Hour; 1980; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Scooby and Scrappy-Doo/Puppy Hour; 1982; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

All-New Scooby and Scrappy-Doo Show; 1983; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

The New Scooby-Doo Mysteries; 1984; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Scooby's Mystery Funhouse; 1985; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

13 Ghosts of Scooby-Doo; 1985; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

A Pup Named Scooby-Doo; 1988; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Mark:

Battle of the Planets; 1978; Syndicated; Tatsunoko/Sandy Frank

Alexander Cabot III:

Josie and the Pussycats; 1970; CBS; Hanna-Barbera

Josie and the Pussycats in Outer Space; 1972; CBS; Hanna-Barbera

Steve Wilson, Joe Conway:

Sky Hawks; 1969; ABC; Pantomine / Ken Snyder

Tank Mallory, Dexter Carter:

Hot Wheels; 1969; ABC; Pantomine / Ken Snyder

Groove:

The Chattanooga Cats; 1969; ABC; Hanna-Barbera

Cliffjumper:

Transformers; 1984; Syndicated; Marvel Prod.

Waldo:

What's New, Mr. Magoo?; 1980; CBS; DePatie-Freling

Peter Cottontail:

Here Comes Peter Cottontail; (special); 1971; ABC; Rankin-Bass

Uncas:

Famous Classic Tales: Last of the Mohicans; 1975; CBS; Hanna-Barbera

REMEMBERING BILLY

The actor who had the deepest voice in cartoons played Pegleg Pete, and The Big Bad Wolf and had a busy career in front of the camera.

by Hames Ware

I'm uncertain of which California stay it was, but I'm pretty sure it was my first time out there. I know my reasons for going were multifold - as co-editor, with Jerry Bails, of the *Who's Who of American Cartoonists*, part of my trip would be devoted to gathering more research on the many West Coast animators and in-betweeners who'd drawn (mostly anonymously) for comic books. Over the years I had already been corresponding with several and, thanks to fan/pros like Bill Spicer and Milt Gray, I would be put in touch with others.

Another purpose in going West was pure fun and relaxation. My post-high school girlfriend Rhonda was starring in *Hair* at the Aquarius Theater, and I would be staying with her and her brother Scott at their house on Holly Street in North Hollywood, with easy access to all the places I hoped to go. (Speaking of going places, Rhonda would go on from *Hair* to starring in *The Robber Bridegroom* on Broadway, as well as doing many of the female roles on National Lampoon Radio Show with John Belushi, Dan Ackroyd and Chevy Chase pre-*Saturday Night Live*. Even now she's writing country-western songs and performing in the current off-Broadway hit *Cowgirls!*)

But this article is entitled "Remembering Billy." So let me cut to the chase!

The third purpose in my trip West was to gather, via first hand interviews, cartoon voice data to assist the definitive article I was working on with British animation historian, Graham Webb, on cartoon voice people of the Thirties through Fifties for fellow Arkansan Mike Barrier's pre-**Animation Planet** magazine, the wonderful *Funnyworld*.

Milt Gray, animator par excellent and host equally excellent, was a tremendous help in this latter area. Milt, because of the respect in which he was held, was able to pick up the phone and instantly talk to Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, and many others, and thanks to Milt I was able to talk (and later correspond) at length with Bob Clampett; the wonderful Walter Tetley (voice of Lantz's *Andy Panda* and to another generation the voice of Sherman in The Sherman and Mr. Peabody segments of *The Bullwinkle Show* and a veteran performer on radio); and Jimmy MacDonald at Disney was able to tell me he'd taken over from Walt (and a few other subs) the voice of Mickey Mouse around the time of *Mickey and the*

Beanstalk. There were many others with whom I'd have a chance to talk, but the most personable meaningful phone call of them all would be pure serendipity, or, from my perspective, a gift from God!

I was looking up a number in the huge Los Angeles telephone directory, when my eyes fell unbelievably on a name that conjured up so many connective memories and associations I stopped dead in my tracks as it all sank in. The name staring back at me from the phone book was Billy Bletcher!

Now to those who may wonder why that name and its very presence in the phone book held such meaning, let me say that for me there was no name my eyes could have stumbled upon that could have evoked so many different facets of film history and early influences.

Billy Bletcher was born in 1894 in Lancaster, PA and entered films in 1913 at the Vitagraph studios in Brooklyn, NY, where he was a supporting player to the first comic star of American film, the now forgotten John Bunny. In the Teens and Twenties, he worked for Mack Sennett in Hollywood, had his own starring silent comedy series, and in the Thirties, he labored at Hal Roach's studio with Laurel and Hardy, the Our Gang kids (frequently cast as Spanky's McFarland's father) and with Billy Gilbert in their own series. Bletcher was a busy character actor who worked in B westerns and A films alike. You can spot him by renting such films as *Babes in Toyland*, *Destry Rides Again*, *Satan Met A lady*, *The Patsy*, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, and *Sullivan's Travels*.

For an animated cartoon fan like myself, Billy Bletcher was the finest cartoon voice villain of all time; The big bad wolf in the Disney *Three Little Pigs* and Peg Leg Pete for the Mickey Mouse cartoons to the infamous Pincushion Man in *Balloon Land* and many others at all studios. And for any one who'd grown up listening to Capitol Albums



recordings for children, Billy's great basso profundo could be found all over the place. That same wonderful voice could be heard doing the "Hi Yo Silver" intro to the Republic Pictures' Lone Ranger serial and on various radio shows broadcast from the West Coast.

As remarkable as all that is, the reader may be asking why Billy hadn't been on my list of people to contact in the first place? The short and simple answer, as difficult as it may seem, no one, including myself had had any idea that Billy was still alive!! At the time my eyes fell upon Billy's name in the L.A. phonebook, all of the many accomplishments I've just enumerated were many years past.

In fact as I held my breath and dialed the number I honestly believed I would be getting a son, a widow or worst of all, a recording saying the number had been disconnected. (As I had so disappointedly when I dialed the listing for Bernice Hansen, the best of the "little voice" cartoon characters in cartoons of the 1930's.)

But I don't mind admitting there was a catch in my throat as a booming basso voice bellowed a friendly "Hello!" on the other end of the line. Whether it was my southern accent or the genuine heartfelt joy coming through my voice, Billy quickly acknowledged he was indeed, the same Billy Bletcher very much



That's Billy underneath that beard in the W.C. Fields comedy *The Dentist*.

alive, and, yes, though he'd mostly been professionally inactive the past decade or two, he still did a few things now and then, and, yes, he'd be delighted to reminisce a bit with me, and at my leisure to drop over and visit with him and his beloved and gracious talented wife of many years, Arline.

As difficult as it may be to believe, it became apparent that the joy and exhilaration in my voice at having "found" Billy alive and well, was paralleled by his own delight at being remembered!

This was in an era before literally legions of fans would seek out and interview virtually every individual who'd ever worked, no matter how obscurely, in any facet of the motion picture industry.

Leonard Maltin and a few others had begun to do a bit of this, but somehow Billy had escaped notice, and I guess it was truly destiny that I, to whom he and his career represented so much, would be afforded the opportunity to become friends with Billy and his family.

I guess because my respect and admiration for Billy and his career was heartfelt

and obvious, and that I had no agenda other than to just sit and listen (I carried no tape recorder, no note pad, wasn't writing a book, etc.) Billy and Arline invited me to come over to their long time residence on North Normandie for a visit.

As I climbed the steps up to the door I felt like I was a time traveler. I would later learn that Billy and Arline had lived here since the early days; a time when, as Arline recalled, W.C. Fields used to walk by with cans of fresh shot film under his arm and call up to Billy saying "millions of laughs in these cans, Billy, millions of laughs!...." Billy had been in several of Fields' films including *The Old Fashioned Way* and *The Man on the Flying Trapeze*.

I knocked on the door and even though I'd always known that Billy was diminutive in height (this contrast with his deep, deep bass voice was often used for comedy effect) I wasn't fully prepared for truly how short Billy was, for opening the door was a smiling, almost elderly elf-like individual. (Billy dubbed the voice of the mayor of the munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz*, but at barely five feet tall Billy almost could have been on-

camera in the 1939 classic and fit right in).

Billy and Arline were delighted I had come to visit they introduced me to their beautiful daughter Barbara (both Arline and Barbara had done movie work in a variety of jobs) and it was instantly obvious to me that this household was a warm and happy one.

Billy sat me right down on the sofa and soon we were leafing together through a huge and yellowed scrapbook that Arline had lovingly put together highlighting Billy's career. (her own modesty belied the fact that several of the earliest stills pointed out that she too had enjoyed several successes as well.)

Every page of Billy's scrapbook added to what I'd already known but never fully grasped until now; Billy Bletcher had been a part of Hollywood so long and so deeply that he was a living, breathing museum of memories. Here was Billy with Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in their *Babes in Toyland* feature, and several shorts (since Billy seemed to have a soft spot for Southerners and since I was such a fan of Georgian Oliver Hardy I was a bit surprised that Billy had been much less close to Hardy than to Laurel.) Here he was

with W.C.Fields in one of Field's classic comedy short *The Dentist*. ("Is he standing in a hole?" Fields remarks as Billy walks in camouflaged under a heavy beard.) Billy generously and spontaneously pulled two photos off the album pages, bestowing them upon me with insistence. Each turn of the page brought a story to mind. Billy and Arline had fond memories of my favorite character actor Paul Hurst (*Gone with the Wind*, *The Ox-Bow Incident*, et al) and we visited well on into the early evening.

I thanked my gracious hosts and left, understandably in high spirits. A few days later I was further happily surprised when Billy called me at Rhonda's and invited me to join him on a drive to the Motion Picture Country Hospital, to visit a long-time friend, Baby Peggy, who had been residing there (along with hundreds of other retired or ailing movie folk).

Because it was another unexpected opportunity to spend time with Billy, and knowing virtually nothing about the infamous Los Angeles Freeway, I never gave a moment's thought to the possibility that this gracious octogenarian had not been making this drive on a regular basis in perhaps a very long time!

I can't say I even gave it much thought when Billy got behind the wheel of what even then might have been called an antique car. My memory is dim; I think Billy's car was a '48 Studebaker, but that's probably become the car, true or not as I have reconnected this story over the past quarter century!

And so it was that we set out that beautiful California day; a young Arkie happy and ignorant as a lark, and a wonderful old time movie man delightedly sharing long time stories of his 50-plus years in Hollywood. I was so engrossed in what Billy was relating, it was several miles before I began to realize that we were on a freeway with several lanes of traffic on either side of us zooming past. I did realize we seemed to be going much slower than the others and at one point I turned and looked behind us. In the lane Billy had chosen to drive in, literally hundreds of cars were backed up behind us, some angry faces and horn honking were just beginning when simultaneously a police car pulled alongside and motioned Billy to a traffic island smack in the middle of this massive freeway!

Somehow Billy managed to get his little car on to the island and as six lanes of traffic on each side of us zoomed by, a state trooper who must have been nearly seven feet tall ambled up to the driver's side and asked in a no-nonsense voice, to see Billy's drivers license.

Billy promptly responded with his license, all the while telling the totally detached trooper about our mission to the Motion Picture Home, obviously oblivious to why he'd been

stopped.

Billy's honest unawareness at first seemed to peeve the trooper ("Sir, do you realize you had traffic backed up for several miles?") But then as he continued to be baffled by it all, the trooper warmed considerably, but still in distinctly authoritative tones told Billy that he needed to get off the freeway as soon as possible, asking Billy if he could get back out into the traffic flow long enough to find an exit, and a less traveled route to our destination. Billy's response of complete confidence at being able to manage both tasks was not borne out in reality as I was now finally seeing it. In fact, now wide-awake, it sunk in to my previously fogged brain that the only thing between us and instant death was the paint job on Billy's '48 Studebaker!!

I gently suggested to Billy that he let me take over the wheel, at least long enough to get us back out into the sea of speeding automobiles that surrounded us on both sides.

Billy would hear none of it. By golly, he emphatically declared, I was his guest and he was the host, driver and tour guide, and so as Billy, without looking, or so it seemed to me, just careened his little car back out into what seemed to me to be a solid stream of speeding metal, I closed my own eyes, said a silent prayer and prepared to die!

To this day, apart from divine intervention I do not know how Billy was able to not only get us back on and then off that freeway of death, but to also get us via a residential route to the Motion Picture Hospital, but he did, God bless him.

At the Motion Picture County Hospital Billy's friend, former child star "Baby" Peggy was certainly no baby in size or age, but she was, as to be expected, a close friend of Billy's. A wonderful gregarious lady, bubbling with enthusiasm and good cheer. She did have a somber note; one of the Three Stooges had just been admitted (Larry Fine, I would later hear) and was not doing too well.

Billy suggested I walk around while he and Baby Peggy reminisced and so I did just that, wandering the hallways and open foyers reading the plaques on the walls and as I wandered into a new foyer I saw a man sitting alone on a small sofa, dressed in a bathrobe and puffing on a cigarette. I recognized him almost immediately despite the toll and obvious illness had taken upon his once heroic presence. It was Bruce Cabot, the human hero of *King Kong* and friend and co-star of John Wayne among many other accomplishments.

He looked up, saw me, smiled and waved. I walked over, shook his hand and told him how good it was to see him. We talked a bit (again about Paul Hurst) and then I felt I needed to get back to Billy and Baby Peggy and was walking that way when a nurse reminiscent of Nurse Ratchett in *One Flew*

Over the Cuckoo's Nest accosted me in an apoplectic rage. "Who are you!? What are you doing here?! Get out immediately!" I never got a chance to answer, no opportunity to explain that I would never purposely intrude on anyone, but for the second time this day I felt like Billy and I had inadvertently wound up in the wrong place. Certainly I didn't blame Billy, or the nurse for that matter, she was just doing her jobs. So I sheepishly exited quickly to find Billy who was saying his good-byes to Baby Peggy. I decided not to mention the incident with the nurse. And unlike the drive out, the drive back was relaxed and unhectic, filled with Billy's wonderful stories and great deep basso chuckle.

In turn, I entertained Billy with some "Arkie goes to Hollywood" stories, less traumatic than the most recent one. I told him of going into the Audobon Society Gift Shop to try to buy a bird whistle for my girlfriend, and having the shop keeper stop me in mid-sentence saying "Son - I can't understand a word you are saying!"

Back at Billy's, he came from the mailbox a bit irate at still another example of behavior he felt was totally inappropriate. He was holding one of the Union trade newspapers that went out to all performers. "Look at this!" He said angrily pointing to a letter that had been written by a well known voice person who did most of his work for the children's market. I scanned the letter, as Billy railed about the obscenities and profanities that laced this published letter. Billy, who was certainly no prude, and could use salty language himself from time to time, was upset that the individual who'd written the letter, and the trade paper, that published it had ignored the children and young people who might be reading it. "A disgrace" Billy declared.

His attention was quickly drawn to a more pleasant declaration. The television at Billy's had been on, more as background than anything else, and what had caught Billy's attention was a commercial featuring a pert young actress, totally unknown to me or anyone else at that time. "See her?" Billy declared, "She is going to be a star!" Billy's half-century in show business had left him with an innate ability to spot star quality, and of course time would prove him right on this one too; it was Sandy Duncan!

A number of the wonderful contacts I'd been introduced to would serendipitously merge at what had to be one of the great highlights of my stay, and that was attending one of Mark Kausler's magnificent cartoon shows.

Animation Planet readers probably are aware that Mark is not only a superbly gifted animator, but probably animated cartoon's greatest fan and collector as well. Even back then Mark's collection was extensive, and

Mark's generosity in putting together programs so as to share with others extended to his always trying to include the surviving artisans who'd actually been a part of the cartoons he was showing.

This particular showing included several of Billy's bravura voices; The Big Bad Wolf and Pincushion Man to name a couple, so Billy was to be one of the featured guests. But Billy was at a stage in his life where he really wasn't up to crowds - even a smaller one, so he sent his lovely and gracious granddaughter Michele and her husband in his place, and I had the opportunity to see that three generations of Bletchers carried on the family tradition with pride. Michele was a bit apprehensive. A rumor had spread that an individual in attendance was upset that a portion of the uncut version of *3 Little Pigs* had the big bad wolf adopting, at one point, a caricatured Jewish peddler voice as a ploy to get into the pigs' home, and that this individual was ready to nail anybody who was in attendance that night associated with it. (This politically correct fellow was in fact the same one, who upon being introduced to me initially and being told that I was from Arkansas, looked down at my feet and remarked, "Geez I didn't know people from Arkansas wore shoes!")

Anyway at the point that the big bad wolf went into his peddler voice, I leaned over to Michele and was happy to be able to reassure her that neither she nor Billy needed to worry about anyone laying into Billy or her because, though Billy had been doing the wolf's voice throughout the *Three Little Pigs*, at the point the wolf takes on the peddler voice, Pinto Colvig delivered the lines! So happily the evening's festive mood continued unabated, and I was able to enjoy meeting and visiting with some of Mark's other distinguished guests, like Frank Tashlin (who was as tall as Billy was short!)

Tashlin and Billy went way back together and no doubt, once in live action film direction Tashlin had seen to it that Billy got small roles in films like some of the Jerry Lewis movies Billy popped up in.

As far as being a source for info on the lesser known cartoon voice people, Tashlin, like Chuck Jones, could "see" the people he'd used at Warner's, but just couldn't recall names.

And so time came for the Arkie to return home, and I bid good-bye to all who had been so kind to me. Billy and I carried on a lively correspondence, and would call me from time to time when something special was

happening, such as after the *Films in Review* magazine printed my piece on Billy. Even though it was in truncated form and consigned to the letters page, it had at least served the purpose to bring to others' attention that Billy was not only one of the most richly experienced of surviving film pioneers, but also still active and available for work and interviews. Consequently another one of his calls was to tell me that he was to be one of the featured biographies in a large hard cover book called *The Real Tinsel* published by MacMillan.

And then came one of Billy's last calls. He was going to be on the currently highly popular TV show *Get Smart*. It was a wonderful cameo part that had Billy as an old time radio announcer climbing up a ladder to reach the boom microphone. I made sure to watch the episode, and Billy was right; it was a wonderful bit (for some unearthly reason Billy's voice was dubbed - perhaps by *Get Smart* regular voice-over William Woldson) and I called Billy afterwards to tell him how much I'd enjoyed it and him.

And now thanks to **Animation Planet** I am able to share that enjoyment and appreciation again!

Best Wishes to



from
Richard Gordon
and Gordon Films, Inc.

Back in the Seventies, I distinctly remember being pleasantly shocked when I realized that the voice of Dick Dastardly on an otherwise forgettable Hanna-Barbera show was none other than an idol of my youth, ventriloquist Paul Winchell. I'm sure all animation fans have had that happy epiphany when they discover a favorite performer from other part of show business has created a voice characterization. Here's a number of well-known performers turned-voice actors. - G. Michael Dobbs

Cliff Edwards

He is remembered for just one voice in animation, but it was truly memorable, and that one role ultimately became his calling card despite his many appearances in film and successes as a recording star. Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards had been a headliner in vaudeville, a popular song stylist, and busy comic actor when he was recruited by Walt Disney to provide the voice of Jiminy Cricket in *Pinocchio* (1940).

Born in 1895 in Hannibal, MO, Edwards began his singing career in saloons. His recording the song "Ja Da," became a hit and Edwards found himself touring vaudeville houses and eventually becoming a Broadway



Cliff Edwards (far left) listens into a secret being told to opera star Lawrence Tibbet in the MGM production *The Southerner*.



star in shows such as *The Ziegfeld Follies*, *Lady be Good*, and *Sunny*. He stayed busy in recording and was equally at home with pop songs and bluesy, sometimes risqué, material.

Edwards made the jump to film in 1929 by performing "Singing in the Rain" in MGM's *The Hollywood Revue*. This led for more work with the studio as a supporting actor in comic parts. For instance, he worked with Buster Keaton in three of his sound comedies at MGM, *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath*, *Doughboys*, and *The Sidewalks of New York*. Edwards appeared a number of films, both "A" and "B" throughout the Thirties. The height of his acting career was his role of "The

Reminiscent Soldier" in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

He created the voice of Jiminy Cricket in *Pinocchio*, and also was the voice of Jim Crow in *Dumbo* (1941) and reprised the Jiminy Cricket role in *Fun and Fancy Free* in 1947. he also would record the Cricket role for a number children's recordings and appearances on the Disney television show.

In the Forties, Edwards turned up in a number of "B" films, especially Westerns, where he was the comic sidekick to the hero. Although he did have an early television show, (*The Cliff Edwards Show* in 1949), Edwards' time in the limelight diminished through the

years until his death in 1971.

Hans Conried

Columbia University-educated Hans Conried was born in Baltimore, MD, in 1917. Not only did he have one of the most recognizable voices as a voice artist, he also had one of the most recognized faces in motion pictures and television. Conried was an extremely busy character actor who made his on-screen debut in 1938 when he appeared in *Dramatic School*. Proving his versatility early on, Conried found he was being cast in both villainous and comedy parts. His ease with accents led to his playing evil Nazis to the lovable Lebanese Uncle Tonoose in the *Make*



Hans Conried

Room for Daddy television show.

As an on-screen actor, Conried's most memorable role was the evil genius Dr. Terwilliker in *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T*. The film was written and designed by children's author Dr. Suess and has been hailed in recent years as one of the American cinema's most imaginative fantasy films.

In 1953, Conried essayed his first voice role for animation, the combination assignment of Mr. Darling and Captain Hook for Disney's *Peter Pan*. Conried recalled to film historian Leonard Maltin that not only he did record the voice over a period of months, but he also was filmed for a reference film to be used by the animators.

Obviously Conried enjoyed working in animation, because over the next two decades he returned many times to cartoons. The voice which undoubtedly endeared him to baby boomer animation fans was that of arch villain Snidely Whiplash appearing in the Dudley Do-Right segments of the *Rocky and Bullwinkle* shows. Whiplash is Conried's clever interpretation of the over-ripe Victorian bad guy, and while Whiplash was indeed pure evil, Conried made sure the character did elicit a little sympathy every time the pure but



Sterling Holloway

stupid Mountie accidentally foiled one of his plans.

Conried also created the lovable neer-do-well Uncle Waldo in another Jay Ward television series *Hoppity Hooper*. Conried was also the on-screen host for another Jay Ward program, *Fractured Flickers*. The program, which was controversial to many film purists, put comic soundtracks to silent films. Lon Chaney's classic *Hunchback of Notre Dame* became "Dinky Dunston, Boy Cheerleader," for instance.

In animated feature films, Conried also appeared in *1001 Arabian Nights* (1959), *The Magic Fountain* (1961), and *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1969). Conried's last work was in the television series *American Dream* in 1981. The character actor died in 1983.

Paul Winchell

For a generation of children growing up in the Fifties and Sixties, Paul Winches was a favorite television staple. The ventriloquist and his dummies Jerry Mahoney and Knucklehead Smith were in shows of their own and appeared in numerous guest appearances on other programs. Only the venerable Edgar Bergen had more name recognition as a ventriloquist.

Like Bergen, Winchell branched out as a performer in the Sixties and Seventies. He

appeared as an actor in a number of television series and was part of the cast for Jerry Lewis' *Which Way to the Front?* in 1970. In 1968 he created the voice of Tigger in the acclaimed *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day*. He repeated the role in *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977) and in Pooh television productions. He also was the voice of the Chinese Cat in Disney's *The Aristocats* (1970) and the voice of Boomer in *The Fox and the Hound* (1985).

Winchell was even busier at Hanna-Barbera where he was the voice of Dick Dastardly and Muttley in a number of shows including *The Perils of Penelope Pitstop*, *The Wacky Races*, and *Stop That Pigeon*. He also was the voice of Gargamel on the long-running hit *The Smurfs*. Winchell returned to Disney in 1985 for the role of Zummi in *The Gummi Bears*.

Winchell has become well known outside of show business for his work on artificial hearts. Despite a lack of formal training, Winchell's contributions have been hailed by medical authorities as breakthroughs in the development of a mechanic heart.

Sterling Holloway

Whether he was the hypnotic snake of *The Jungle Book* or everyone's favorite Pooh bear, Sterling Holloway's distinctive voice became a favorite of animation fans



Sterling Holloway plays a jive-talking hipster in the Fifties rock musical *Shake, Rattle and Rock*.

everywhere. Born in 1905 in Cedartown, GA, Holloway started his on-screen acting career during the last days of the silent cinema in the 1927 production of *Casey at the Bat*. His voice naturally lent itself to comedy roles, and Holloway made a smooth transition to sound as a character actor. Watch American Movie Classics or Turner Classic Movies long enough, and you're bound to see Holloway popping up many times as hayseeds, delivery boys, and other supporting characters. With his high-pitched voice and youthful looks, Holloway played frequently played characters considerably younger than himself.

In his long career, Holloway worked with many of the legends of Hollywood, including John Gilbert, Harold Lloyd, Gary Cooper, and Clint Eastwood. He even was Gene Autry's sidekick in several films!

His association with the Disney studios began with a role in *Dumbo* (1941) as Mr. Stork. He had a role in *The Three Caballeros* in 1945 and was the narrator for the Peter and the Wolf segment of *Make Mine Music* (1947), and was the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland* in 1951. A non-Disney credit was his narration in *Alakazam the Great* (1961), and he returned to the studio in 1967 to create Kaa the snake in *The Jungle Book*.

The cartoon voice with which he is most identified is, of course, Winnie the Pooh which he created in 1966 for *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*. He played the role repeatedly until his death in 1992.



Paul Winchell as he looks today.

HalleLulu!:

Little Lulu Conquers the Small Screen

by Gord Wilson

"She came, she saw, she conquered." There could be no more fitting motto for Little Lulu, who, over the last 60 years, has appeared in nearly every permutation of the funnies and film, from single panel and newspaper strips to comic books and theatrical cartoons. Now, starring in CINAR'S *The Little Lulu Show*, Marge's magnificent moppet is out to conquer the small screen as well.

After a nearly 50 year hiatus from the world of cartoons, the Montreal animation company brought Lulu back in 1995 for six half-hour specials of *The Little Lulu Show* on HBO. Now they've returned her to the spotlight in 20 new episodes on HBO and CTV, and if Lulu's late creator, Marjorie Henderson Buell, is watching from the Great Beyond, she has every reason to be pleased. CINAR drew for inspiration on the entire Lulu cannon, from Marge's panel cartoons in the *Saturday Evening Post* through John Stanley's stories in Dell comic books, to the Famous-Paramount cartoons, while adding their own '90's spin.

Buell based Lulu's corkscrew curls and mischievous demeanor on herself as a little girl. She began drawing the single panel *Little Lulu* in the *Saturday Evening Post* as a replacement for Carl Anderson's *Henry*. Lulu made irregular appearances in her signature red dress in *Dell Four Color Comics* beginning in 1945, until she received her own bi-monthly comic in 1948. The next year *Marge's Little Lulu* went monthly, with Lulu's friend, Tubby, gaining his own spin-off title in 1952.

Marge did not labor in anonymity as did Otto Mesmer with *Felix the Cat*. Long before John Kricfalusi and the saga of *Ren and Stimpy*, she struck a blow for creator's rights, as "Marge" on the masthead of Dell's *Little Lulu* comics left no doubt as to ownership. Marge oversaw the comics, supervised a syndicated newspaper strip and consulted on the Famous cartoons. When she retired in 1971, she sold the rights to Little Lulu to Western Publishing Company, which dropped the sobriquet "Marge" from the title beginning the next year. Marge



Little Lulu makes a comeback to animation. (© CINAR Films. All rights reserved.)

passed away in 1993 at the age of 88, just two years before her creative offspring would return to the screen in *The Little Lulu Show*.

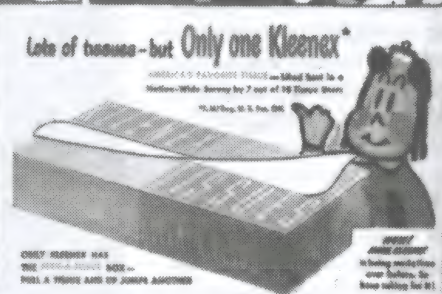
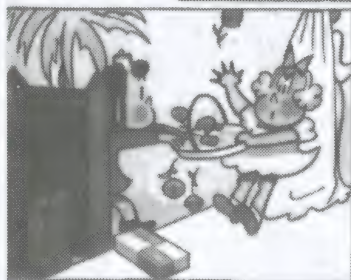
Stanley Storyboards

Storyboarding the Dell comics was one of the most prolific and inventive writers ever to grace a newsprint page, John Stanley, who

did pencils until 1959, and stories until he left the comic in 1961. Arnold Drake did storyboards from 1970 on. Artists included Gordon Rose, Al Owens and Irving Tripp, who inked stories, beginning with LL #1, and whose painterly style gave the covers their unique, graphic look. Stanley also produced other Dell titles, including a teen girl number, *Thirteen Going on Eighteen*, and a witty entry

LITTLE LULU

Something to cry for
by Marge



Lulu was the commercial mascot for Kleenex from 1946 to 1960. In this Sunday newspaper ad from 1947, Lulu finds a new use for the tissues.

in the monster kid genre, *Melvin Monster*, from 1965-1969. "Little Lulu" enjoyed a 40 year run, until 1987. The following year, Another Rainbow Publishing released the first set of an 18 volume hardbound collectors' edition, reprinting both the *Four Color* and *Little Lulu* comics.

With Marge's approval, Stanley expanded the world of Lulu and Tubby to include Willie, Iggie and the boys' gang, Lulu's best friend, Annie, and stuck-up rich kids, Gloria and Wilbur Van Snobb. Some of the funniest episodes revolve around Mr. McNabbem, the truant officer, and his efforts to catch kids playing hookey.

Stories also explore the friendly rivalry between the boys and girls, the "No Girls Allowed" clubs' pranks on the girls, and Lulu's attempts to get even, with hilarious results. Tubby increasingly appeared as a junior detective in his crime-fighting persona of "The Spider." After much mayhem, the culprit nearly always turns out to be Lulu's father, Mr. Moppet. Stanley also introduced a fantasy element with Witch Hazel, L'il Itch and Scarecrow Boy. Imaginative elements enter in the tall tales Lulu tells her bratty next-door neighbor, Alvin, who will only be appeased if she tells him a story. The best of Lulu's stories cast her in the title role of moving and profound cautionary tales with wise morals that Alvin usually ignores.

From Funnies to Film

The Famous Studio made 26 *Little Lulu* cartoons for Paramount between 1944 and 1948, adapting Marge's long-legged moppet to the big screen. While the animation is smooth and the backgrounds lavish, the early cartoons were made before Stanley had deepened Lulu's character and widened her

circle of friends. As a result, Lulu seems interchangeable with any character in the Famous/ Paramount roster: that could be Little Audrey fishing in "A Bout With a Trout," or Baby Huey golfing in "Cad and Caddy," or Casper camping in "A Scout with the Gout." Directors on the series, Isadore Sparber, Bill Tytla and Seymour Kneitel, trotted out any number of slapstick situations and exaggerated "takes" for Lulu, as for other characters in the Famous line-up.

In Sparber's "Indoor Outing" (1944), for example, Lulu has a black "Mammy," Mandy, who flees when ghosts steal their picnic lunch, but Lulu, always the fighter, fearlessly takes on the unwelcome visitors. "Bargain Counter Attack" holds up as an enjoyable formula cartoon, but following Marge's panel cartoon, Lulu is nearly silent—she has one line and repeats it to comic effect throughout the cartoon. What most people remember from the films is the crowd-pleasing theme song by Fred Wise, Buddy Kaye and Sidney Lippman, with the memorable refrain, "Little Lulu, I love you-lu just the same." When Paramount was unable to renegotiate the rights to Little Lulu in 1949, they replaced her with Little Audrey, who also starred in comic books, which kicked the "little girl" cartoon genre into high gear, and helped to bring any number of delightful characters to prominence.

Enter CINAR

Inspiration to revive Lulu came when Ron Weinberg, President of CINAR, and Cassandra Schafhausen, Vice President of Animation, met with Nancy Steingard of Western Publishing to consider future projects. Steingard ticked off a list of Western Publishing properties, and when she got to

Lulu, the three found they were kindred souls. It seems remarkable that in the nearly five ensuing decades since the Famous films no one thought to bring Lulu to the small screen, but if the cartoon muse was waiting for the right parents to revive Marge's brainchild, she couldn't have done better than CINAR's creative partners. With such a welter of expressions to choose from over Lulu's 60 year history, the team's first question was what would Lulu look like in the '90s?

A Lulu for the '90s

While keeping close to the spirit of Stanley, and retaining her signature red dress and corkscrew curls, the new Lulu deviates substantially from the Famous cartoons. While Mae Questal, the voice of Betty Boop, voiced Lulu for the former, comedienne Tracy Ullman lends her not only pipes but an attitude. And if the Famous Studio's Lulu was almost a pantomime character, today she does outspoken, stand-up comedy. "Tracy is so elastic in her characterizations," explained Schafhausen, "there's an attitude she brings which is very approachable, very independent and very funny. She has a real take on life that seemed to jive with Lulu." Recalling that the wildly successful *The Simpsons* began as bumpers on *The Tracey Ullman Show*, her voice work on *The Little Lulu Show* seems a natural and visionary step.

In the beautifully retro look and careful touches, the CINAR team was careful to stay faithful to Stanley's style. "The thing we loved about the comic book's style is that it's so graphic and the line is so clear and the color saturation is so contemporary," explained Schafhausen. To emulate that look, the background colors are "slightly off." "Rather than jewel pastels or true pastels or primary



The opening to *The Little Lulu Show* (© CINAR Films. All rights reserved.)

colors, the background tones are slightly grayed so the primary colors of the characters really pop. The heavy black line is also very distinctive in Lulu."

The show's unique format inventively mixes old and new, paying homage to both Stanley and Marge. Each half-hour episode consists of three "Lulutoon" cartoons, short stand-up monologues and 30 second, silent "Lulubites," reminiscent of Marge's early panels. The stand-up segment, while new, harkens back to a monologue page called "Lulus diry" (Lulu's Diary), in which she recounted the week's misadventures, which was a recurring feature in the comic book. "She's so expressive all by herself without any dialogue, we felt it was really fun to do these 30 second bits with just music and effects, pantomime, as Marge did in the *Post*."

Comics to Cartoons

For the first six HBO specials, CINAR drew consciously from the Dell material, and comic buffs will be delighted to see the realization of Stanley's stories and the continuity of characters. Lulutoon "The Green Girl," for instance, comes from Stanley's story of the same name in LL #12 (1949). "Beautiful Lulu" originally appeared in LL #8 (1949), and "Rainy Day" in LL #24 (1950). Some Lulubites were drawn from Marge's panels and later wordless comic strips, namely "No Means No" (episode 6) from LL #21 (1950), and "Baseball Blues (episode 21) from LL #26 (1950). "We derived a lot of our material from the Another Rainbow sets," Schafhausen confirmed. "Thank God for those, or we'd be sitting with seven thousand boxes of ancient comics, which is fun but a little tedious when you're in production."

For the 1997 shows, however, the team looked farther afield. "For the first six specials we stayed very close to the original material. On the 20 episodes we've since done, we've

truant officers are a thing of the past, replaced by the equally hilarious policeman, Officer McNabb. Many episodes, however, are still close adaptations of the comics. "You always have the question of how to adapt a character in the shift from strip to animation," Schafhausen points out, "and the people who do it best, I think, stay the closest to the original idea."

Viewers worldwide have joined sixty years of her fans in the comics in opening their arms to Lulu, but CINAR originally met opposition in trying to sell the series. That's primarily due to a prevailing demographic view, carried over from the toy industry, which says that girls will watch boys shows but boys won't watch girls shows. "You propose this sort of thing to people, and they look at you like you're nuts, because they don't think it will sell," Schafhausen relates. "My contention is that if you have a strong character, it will appeal, no matter what—maybe not to 11 year-old boys, but they're not the whole audience." Now that the show is out, however, it joins other cartoons that appeal across the board, from *Peanuts* to *Garfield*, in debunking the conventional wisdom.

Schafhausen also thinks that well-wishing critics who initially applauded the show simply for its social significance, lauding Lulu as a young feminist, may have missed the point. "I think trying to attach a label to her in hindsight is unnecessary. She's an independent, feisty, interesting character who

extrapolated from original material, but adapted it into screenplays, so subsequently they're not as direct. We felt we needed more range of motion to develop the stories and characters. Updating meant certain minor changes: instead of paying a dime for something, now a character might pay a dollar. Frustrated Mr. McNabbem is also gone, since

happens to be a girl. I don't think anybody ever thought twice about it before. Independent little girls have always existed, they just haven't gotten much press—whereas Lulu's had press all along. That's who she is and that's why she was great and continues to be great."

Against the Stream

In a way, CINAR is itself a little like Lulu—an independent little company that hasn't gotten much press, swimming against the stream. That's mainly because while independent "adult" animation may be getting more attention these days, kids' cartoons are still dismissed as—well—kids' stuff. Yet, the chance to make quality children's animation is what drew Schafhausen, who has worked with children's programming for 25 years, to the Montreal company.

"I like the kind of material that we choose, and I have to do what I think contributes a variety of interesting material for little kids. That's why I came to CINAR in the first place." She's outspoken when she talks about the need for quality kids' programs that are imaginative and break the mold. "Parents need to give their kids more than Disney, not only from a visual standpoint, but also from the content of the material that they put out, that everybody just sucks down like a milkshake." Another thing that means is that stations and distributors need to hunt for and welcome non-formulaic, imaginative kids' animation. "Diversity to me is a sign of an



Lulu explains it all; a scene from "The Trouble With Boys" (© CINAR Films. All rights reserved.)

intelligent community," she maintains. "If we diminish our access simply because of the weight of the power that puts the material out there, and we diminish people's access to alternative things to see and think about—then we've done the whole culture a disservice."

CINAR has been in films for ten years, and a serious player in animation for the past

seven. Their current line-up bears out Schafhausen's credo, with *The Busy World of Richard Scarry* in its fifth season on Nick Jr., *Arthur* as the #1 rated kids' show on PBS and *The Adventures of Paddington Bear* produced to coincide with the 40th birthday of Michael Bond's lovable Teddy. CINAR is also developing *The Country Mouse and the City Mouse Adventures* in co-operation with Reader's Digest, as well as readying Lyle Lion and the gang of Roger Bollen's syndicated strip, *Animal Crackers*, for the small screen. It speaks to the wealth of quality animation coming out of Canada to note that both the Lulu and Richard Scarry series lost out this year to another imaginative show, *ReBoot*, for this year's Gemini award. For the success of Lulu, however, Schafhausen insists CINAR cannot take all the credit. Marge's unsinkable moppet also found closet Luluphiles in Carol Rosen and Sheila Nevins, heads of the family programming area at HBO. "They've been incredibly supportive of putting out good material," she enthuses, "they love, absolutely love Lulu."

Lulupalooza: A Lulu Lifeline

1935—Marge's panel cartoon begins in *Saturday Evening Post*
 1939—Knickerbocker Toy Company creates first Little Lulu doll.
 1944—First of 26 Famous/Paramount cartoons
 1945—Lulu's first appearance in Dell Four Color Comics #74
 1946—Lulu becomes mascot for Kleenex Tissues
 1948—Dell begins *Marge's Little Lulu* comic book
 1950—syndicated *Little Lulu* newspaper strip begins
 1952—Tubby gets his own comic book
 1961—Two new Paramount cartoons produced: *Alvin's Solo Flight*, *Frog's*

Leg's.

1971—Marge Retires, sell rights to Western Publishing
 1972—LL #207 drops Marge's name from *Little Lulu* masthead
 1978—"Little Lulu Summer Camp Special" on ABC TV Weekend Specials
 1979—"The Big Hex of Little Lulu" on ABC TV Weekend Specials
 1984—Last *Little Lulu* comic book
 1988—Another Rainbow releases first of 18 volume collectors' reprints
 1995—CINAR produces 6 half hour *The Little Lulu Show* specials
 1997—CINAR releases 20 new episodes of *The Little Lulu Show*

I Love Lulu: An Episode Guide to *The Little Lulu Show*

(This guide contains the three Lulutoons per episode only; episodes also include stand-up segments and Lulubites). These brief synopses also don't give away the endings of the shows).

Episode 1: "The Green Girl": Lulu wakes up green one day, and is swarmed by reporters and curiosity seekers. "Rainy Day": Lulu and Tubby head over to each other's houses, but hidden under large umbrellas, keep missing each other. "Beautiful Lulu": When Lulu overhears the boys disparaging her looks, her mom helps her become beautiful.

Episode 2: "Alvin's Record Player": When Alvin plays "Mary Had a Little Lamb" for the 60th time, Mr. Moppet loses his cool. "Lulu's Television Debut": An antique seller tricks Lulu into balancing a priceless vase on her head on TV. "Cry Baby": Alvin's crying because he's got a problem, but he can't remember what it is.

Episode 3: "Snowball War": The boys pelt the girls with snowballs until Lulu seizes their snow fort, and they find themselves up to their necks in snow. "Junior Detective Tubby": Some villain has been writing "Lulu Loves Tubby" all over town, and Lulu enlists "The Spider" to take the case. "Picnic Pirates": Lulu and her friends stage a "girls only" picnic, which leads to a raid by the boys, and, when the boys swim out to the island, revenge by the girls.

Episode 4: "Gilbert the Gorilla": When the biggest and meanest gorilla escapes from the zoo, he winds up in Lulu's bedroom. "Snow Business": When the boys see Lulu and Annie cleaning up snow off people's walks, they try to take over the business. "Egg in the Shoe": Someone put an egg in Mr. Moppet's favorite shoes, and it's time to call in The Spider.

Episode 5: "Business Girl": Lulu sets up a lemonade stand, but when the boys try to ruin her enterprise, they learn that tricky business gets you nowhere. "The Pet Duck": Guess who follows Lulu home from the lake—the smartest duck in the world. "Lulu's Umbrella Service": When Wilbur Van Snobb employs Lulu to keep him dry, his trick backfires and he ends up all wet.

Episode 6: "Rich Little Poor Boy": Every girl in town is ga ga over Gregory Gallant, the famous teen movie star, but Lulu ends up with her picture with him in the paper. "Friends and Enemies": Lulu invites her friends and enemies to her birthday party, but it looks like only the latter will be coming, until she finds out she's got a lot more friends than enemies. "Beauty Contest": When the boys hold a contest for the most beautiful girl, Gloria stacks the cards in her favor, until Lulu announces a contest for the most beautiful boy.

Episode 7: "Hairy Day": Lulu and Tubby

invent a hair-growing lotion for Mr. Moppet that turns his head blue. "Noses Off": Wilbur tries to trick Lulu and Annie with Mr. Van Snobb's anniversary gift for his wife, a noseless Greek bust. "Boy Cannon Ball": Lulu and Annie pay to see Tubby get shot out of a cannon.

Episode 8: "Popcorn Thief": Tubby heads undercover to a girls' sleepover to find the missing bowls of popcorn. "The Little Tornado": The boys are having trouble with the tough Westside gang until Lulu and Annie led a hand. "She Flies Through the Air": Lulu doesn't know how to ski, but she learns fast at the Sky Top Mountain ski jump competition.

Episode 9: "Tiny Tot's Syrup": The gang hates taking Tiny Tot's Syrup, but when Lulu heads to the factory to complain, she's made the new spokesperson. "The Night Before Christmas": Lulu is shocked to hear that Tubby and the boys plan to trap Santa and steal his toys. "The Piggy Bank Guard": Tubby wants Lulu to guard his piggy bank until he's saved \$3 to buy a present for a special girl, whom Lulu thinks is herself.

Episode 10: "Space Kids": Lulu and Annie want to play space explorers with the boys, but when the rocket disappears, have the boys really gone to mars? "The Case of the Disappearing Drum": When Alvin's drum disappears, The Spider is sure that Mr. Moppet is to blame. "From Hero to Zero": The boys

are dying to get Gloria's attention, but the only way she'll notice them is if they're big heroes.

Episode 11: "Detective Story": Tubby's on Lesson Two in his mail-order detective course, but what he doesn't bet on is that Lulu's also on the case. "Swap Shop Pops": Lulu forgets her dad's birthday, which leads to mix-ups with Tubby at the local swap shop. "The Old Master": Van Goof sells his latest masterpiece to an art gallery, but instead it winds up in the boys' clubhouse.

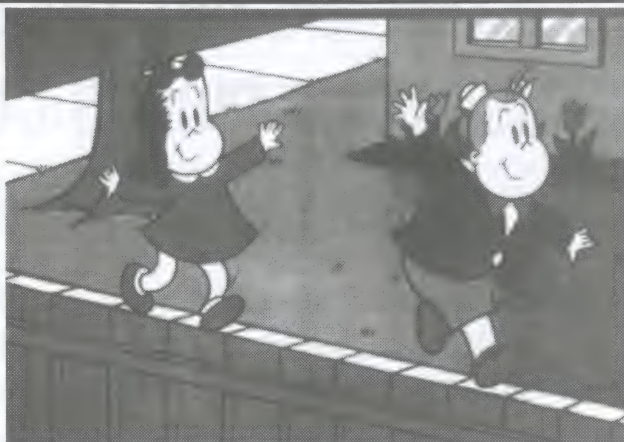
Episode 12: "The Case of the Missing Wig": When the wig for Annie's doll is missing, it's time to call in The Spider, master of disguises. "Froglegs": If the restaurant wants to serve froglegs, Tubby and Lulu know where they can find lots of frogs. "A Wrong Move": Mr. Moppet needs wood to build a bookshelf the same day the boys have to move their clubhouse.

Episode 13: "Special Delivery": Annie and Iggy's parents are about to have a baby, so maybe Lulu can get the stork to make a swap. "The Little Sew and Sews": The Westside Boys are a terror, attacking Lulu and the girls. When Tubby and the boys won't help, she devises her own plan to teach the gang some manners. "Tubby's Doll": Tubby's aunt thinks he's a girl and gives him a doll for his birthday. What if the gang find out?

Episode 14: "Tuxedo Tango": The tailor mistakenly switches Officer McNabb's new uniform with Mr. Moppet's tuxedo. "Football Star": When Tubby's team is one player short in the game against the Westside Boys, Lulu becomes MVP. "Spook Delivery": Lulu and Tubby are volunteered to deliver a package to a haunted house—and worse—the Westside Boys are after them.

Episode 15: "The Dance": When the boys don't ask Lulu, Annie or Margie to the afternoon dance, Lulu finds out that Gloria's behind it all, and leaves her with a barrel of monkeys. "Locked Out": "When Lulu locks herself out of the house, she heads to Tubby's for the spare key, only to find she's not the only one who's locked out. "Kissing Game": Wilbur bets Lulu won't kiss Tubby, who rigs the bet to get six ice cream cones.

Episode 16: "The Fuzzithingus Poppy": When a flower-lover is convinced that Lulu has a rare specimen, she gets a lot more flowers for her mom's birthday. "Leaves for Everyone": Mr. Moppet pays Lulu and Annie to rake leaves, but they have their own idea how to



Tubby and Lulu do their thing (© CINAR Films. All rights reserved.)

clean up the yard. "A Moving Experience": Lulu's devastated to hear the Moppets are moving, but the bon voyage gifts from her friends sure help to make up for it.

Episode 17: "Oh Christmas Tree": When Mr. Moppet takes Lulu to get a Christmas tree, they head for the country to cut one themselves. "Santa's Snowmen": Santa's snowmen go from house to house to see who's been naughty or nice, but why do they look so much like Tubby, Wilbur and Iggy? "The Snoopers": When Tubby and Lulu snoop for presents in their parents' closets, the Moppets and Tompkins come up with a solution.

Episode 18: "Big Jewel Robbery": When a thief steals a fortune in jewels, he doesn't count on running into Lulu and Tubby. "Pot Luck": Tubby and Willy aren't talking to each other, and Lulu must get them to band together against the Westside Boys. "The Spook Tree": Lulu and Tubby head to the cemetery at midnight to make a wish on the spook tree. But how to keep the ghosts from catching them?

Episode 19: "Valentine's Day": Gloria gets valentines galore, but the boys eventually decide to shower them on Lulu. "Gertie Greenbeen": Wilbur's been pulling nasty pranks on the new girl—that is until Lulu comes to the rescue. "Stop Fiddling Around": Tubby's terrible violin playing couldn't possible come in handy—unless, of course, Lulu broke her father's pipe.

Episode 20: "Lucky Lulu": It's Thanksgiving, and Lulu and Annie rescue a hapless turkey from the boys' trap. "Pieces of Eight": When Tubby, Lulu and Alvin find a hidden treasure, getting it off the beach calls for a little creative drowning. "Jumping Beans": Tubby and Lulu trick Iggy into going on errands for their mothers, but the boys pull the old switcheroo.

Episode 21: "Alvinsitting": Lulu is doomed to baby-sit Alvin, who locks her out of the house, until she finds a way to reconcile opposing views. "Two Lulus": Tubby sets out to rescue Lulu when she falls prey to the infamous "Mannequin Man." "The Hat": When Wilbur's dog eats Mrs. Moppet's new hat, Lulu and Tubby set out to make a new one.

Episode 22: "Prisoner Exchange": Marty the Midget has escaped from prison and—surprise!—he looks just like Tubby. "Balloon Derby": Mr. Kohlutz's publicity gimmick backfires when the kids ransack

the city to find his specially marked balloons. "Dummy Skeleton": A skeleton, two coffin-shaped boxes, and kids on roller skates converge in the street.

Episode 23: "Bear Trap": When Tubby goes to collect from the Van Snobbs for his paper route, he finds a robber is also collecting. "Shirley the Shadow": When Alvin asks for a story, Lulu regales him with the tale of a little girl who lost her shadow. "Dog's Life Saver": The dogcatcher is no match for Lulu, Tubby and one very smart dog.

Episode 24: "Bogeyman": Lulu tells Alvin a story about a bogeyman who's not scary, just misunderstood—and all he wants to do is dance. "Tattoo": When word spreads that Lulu and Annie are getting tattoos, angry parents run the proprietor out of town. "Mimibur": The Van Snobbs are throwing a party and all the kids are invited. When Wilbur ruins Lulu and Annie's dresses, he has to appear as the new girl in town.

Episode 25: "Lancelot Jr.": When Lulu and Tubby get stuck in Mr. Van Snobb's famous suit of armor, they have to play out the legend of Lancelot. "Lucky Lady": When a lady in town offers ten dollars to the most polite kid, the boys scramble to be good Samaritans. "Five Little Babies": When the girls catch the boys buck naked at the swimming hole, they top it off by wheeling them in diapers into the Westside Boys' baseball game.

Episode 26: "Potato Kids": When Lulu finds a potato that looks like Tubby, it unleashes a run on vegetable look-a-likes. "The Ventriloquist": "When Tubby learns to throw his voice, Lulu sets out to show him he's the dummy. "Bunny Fun": Tubby's mom volunteers him for the Women's Club spring pageant, and he's forced to dress up in a bunny suit. If the other kids see him he'll never live it down, unless Lulu can hide him.



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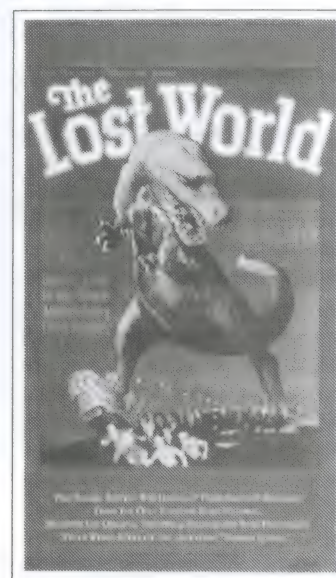
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Hercules Goes into Battle

Disney flexes its muscles with the release of its new summer animated feature

by G. Michael Dobbs

With the less-than-expected critical and fan reaction to the last two Disney animated features (*Pocahontas* and *Hunchback of Notre Dame*), film industry pundits might say The Mouse went back to the team who made *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin*.

Conspiracy theorists should rest easy here as *Hercules*, the newest film by the writing and directing team of John Musker and Ron Clements, has been in production for about four years and wasn't influenced by either of its predecessors and their serious themes.

All kidding aside, *Hercules* is a very important film for Disney. Not only notable for its return to a comedy with dramatic subplots, but its humor is described as "contemporary" by its creative team, which means it should be appealing to both children and adults. It is also clearly a franchise property which will lend itself to a television series and movie sequels like *Aladdin*. Its mythological characters are perfect for licensing (the action figures will undoubtedly be in stores when this article appears).

Hercules is also an historic film for the company as it is the first Disney film in which the work of an inspirational artist can clearly be seen throughout the design of the movie.

Although there may be a platoon of guys in suits who would like to take responsibility for the revival of Disney feature animation, Musker and Clements' treatment of *The Little Mermaid*, and then *Aladdin*, set the stage for the successes of *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*. Speaking to **Animation Planet** from an editing suite at ILM's Skywalker Ranch, Clements and Musker took time from completing the final sound mix on this film to talk about their latest movie.

The Look

After *Aladdin* came out in November of 1992, Clements and Musker took some time off and then began developing a science fiction project which eventually was put on the back burner by then Disney executive Jeffrey Katzenberg. Looking at the projects which the studio had in development, the team was attracted to *Hercules*.

"We looked at various ideas they had in



Ron Clements (left) and John Musker (photo: Kevin Jones; © Disney Enterprises, all rights reserved)

developing and this idea of *Hercules* had been pitched by one of the animators in what they call 'Gong Shows' They're meetings in which people in-house can bring ideas for possible future projects to management and if management likes them they can be put into development. This had been pitched a year or a year and half before we ever got involved with it by Joe Hadir, one of the animators," said Musker.

The idea of adapting classical mythology appealed to the team. "Mythology was such a ripe venue that hadn't been explored," explained Musker.

"It wasn't a stretch to find the contemporary in the ancient" added Clements. Since their artistic inclination is to do a humorous film, both men wanted to do the story as a comedy. Musker said that having watched the sword and sandals epics of the Fifties and Sixties he noticed *Hercules* and company were portrayed as a rather humorless lot. They wanted their story "not to take itself so seriously."

While the humorous approach works for them, they both emphasized the belief that not everything lends itself to comedy. The unspoken rule is that just because it's a cartoon doesn't mean it has to be funny.

"Every movie has its unique approach and there are many valid approaches," said Musker.

Hercules, according to Clements, is an "epic comedy." Musker added that while the production is funny, there are some serious themes to the picture, such as the responsibility of being a role model and hero.

Once Musker and Clements had settled on the idea of producing a film based on Greek mythology, they started doing research to produce a first-draft of the script. Early on in the development of the story British illustrator and designer Gerald Scarfe was brought in to do inspirational or concept drawings.

Rising to prominence in the Sixties for his brilliant and cutting caricatures, Scarfe is no stranger to animation. His work in the film adaptation of *Pink Floyd's The Wall* has become an underground favorite among many animation fans. Scarfe's interests have extended into theater costume and set design which is how he and the production team connected. Musker is a long-time fan of Scarfe's work and had seen a production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* which had been designed by Scarfe.

While Scarfe was in Los Angeles for *The Magic Flute*, Disney animator Rick Macki



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brought him by the Disney Studios for a tour which resulted in Scarfe doing some drawings of his ideas for some of the characters.

Having an artist provide artwork that acts as an inspiration to other artists is nothing new at the Disney studios. Walt Disney brought in noted illustrators, such as Kay Nielson, fifty years ago to provide his artists ideas they could develop.

"It was kind of experimental," explained Clements. "We had various artists doing early development stuff and you don't know what it could lead to. Possibly he could have done some preliminary drawings and that would have been it, but as we saw the work, everybody was really excited about it and we felt that we really wanted to get it into the movie. It had such a distinctive style to it."

What also aided the decision to involve Scarfe more and more in the production was the support of the executives assigned to the film, Peter Scheidner and Tom Schumacher, and that the animation team embraced Scarfe's style.

"We were really supported by management and that's why so much of what Gerald did got into the movie," said Musker.

In *Aladdin*, the influence of a famous illustrator was in evidence but to a far lesser extent. Animator Eric Goldberg used the

style of legendary caricaturist Al Hirschfeld in his design of the Genie, but the deep involvement of Scarfe in the production was a first for Musker and Clements and for the Disney Studios. Musker and Clements arranged a retreat with Scarfe and the animation artists to work on adapting Scarfe's style. Thanks to fax machines, Scarfe and the production team kept in touch with drawings zipping back and forth from Burbank to Scarfe's home in Great Britain.

"I know there's a feeling among a lot of people at Disney that there's a stock style but that's not totally true. There's certainly a similarity between a lot of the movies. On the other hand if you compare the style of *101 Dalmatians* to *Pinocchio* those are totally different," said Clements. He emphasized that directors at Disney want their films to have a unique look.

"The style grows out of the story," Musker explained. "In our case, we were influenced by the [ancient Greek] vase paintings and it turns out in a way Gerald Scarfe's calligraphic style really complemented that."

"He synthesized Greek art with a combination of power and elegance," Musker continued. "He tried to capture that in the character drawings he did. When he did Zeus, for example, he was very monumental and yet he had this elegant filigree. There were details in his hair and his beard and his costume that gave this sort of delicacy."

"I think people think of Disney animation as a certain style, but Disney animation can be adapted into a number of styles," said Clement. "The main thing with Disney animation is a certain kind of acting and performing that is a hard skill to learn."



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The Voices

Does the name of a well-known actor affect the box office success of an animated motion picture? With superstars such as Mel Gibson (John Smith in *Pocahontas*) finding their way into animation voice work, the question is whether people are being cast for their voices or for their names. Musker and Clements firmly deny they participate in this kind of stuntcasting, and for them the only thing which matters is the ability of an actor to perform with his or her voice.

Both known and unknown actors read for the parts on *Hercules* with the final cast being composed of people of varying levels of recognition. Veteran actors James Woods, Rip Torn, and Danny DeVito perform the voices of Hades, Zeus and Hercules' sidekick, Philoctetes, respectively. Tate Donovan, an actor who has been seen in the movies *The Memphis Belle* and *Love Potion #9*, among others, plays Hercules, while Susan Egan is the female lead character, Meg. Egan has been playing the role of Belle in the Broadway production of *Beauty and the Beast*. British leading lady Samantha Egger plays Hera.

"In our case I don't think we've ever done stuntcasting," said Clements. "In *Mermaid* there were no real stars in that movie that were really well-known. Buddy Hackett was probably the best known. With *Aladdin* the big star in that movie was Robin Williams, but I don't think we ever considered that 'stuntcasting.' When we wrote the script we thought of it early on with Robin Williams as the Genie and what we could do with that. It was still more 'this is the right guy for the part.'"

The rule for Clements and Musker is to select the actors "who are best for the role" regardless of their level of fame.

For Hades, the two had many actors read the role with screen bad guy supreme James Woods eventually winning the part. "James Woods wouldn't have come to our minds as the first person for the role," explained Clements, who said they were looking for an actor who can be a comic villain. Woods, while an excellent actor, has had relatively few forays into comedy.

"What we look for in voice actors are people who are very comfortable in front of a mic," said Clements. "People who like to play in front of a microphone. Where you get the best stuff is with actors who are very loose. If an actor becomes stiff in front of the mic



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you're in big trouble. James Woods just played and brought this spin on it."

Woods, like the other voice actors, ad libbed which brought additional life to the character. "That's that you hope for," said Clements.

Unlike Hades, Danny DeVito's character of Philoctetes was written with the actor in mind. Musker and Clements wanted a voice to create a character that was a cross between a Brooklyn-born Yoda (!) and the wily and wheezy fight manager played by Burgess Meredith in the *Rocky* films.

Despite their casting DeVito in their minds, Musker and Clements still tested various actors before settling on DeVito who was last heard on the animated screen as the head bad guy in *Space Jam*.

Rip Torn was also the team's imaginary casting choice when they wrote the character of Zeus. Torn's role as comic Larry Sanders' manager on HBO's *The Larry Sanders Show* inspired that choice. Musker and Clements wanted Hercules' father to have a certain amount of bombast, but also a lot of warmth.

"A fun Zeus," quipped Musker.

Broadway performer Susan Egan is Meg, and she was the second person to be tested for the role. At first Musker and Clements had reservations if the actress would play the role like Belle, whom she had been portraying in *Beauty and the Beast* in New York, but their fears were quickly allayed. Her characterization is "totally different from anything she's done on the stage," said Musker. She had the sarcasm, the wit and the vulnerability the team needed for Meg.

"It's hard to find good animation voices whether they're famous or not famous," explained Clements. "A lot of actors, even very well-known actors, when you take away the visual, what they bring physically to a part, and they just have a voice there's not as much left as one might think." Years ago when dramatic radio was in full bloom, Clements believed it must have been easier to find voice actors as they're were dozens of performers who were trained to act with just their voice.

Bobcat Goldthwait and Matt Frewer, two comedic character actors who are not strangers to animation voice work (Goldthwait did Moxie on The Cartoon Network show, and Frewer did the voice on the latest incarnation of the Pink Panther), appear as Hades' two henchmen Pain and Panic.

"Voices are so important to the animators," explained Clements, "as the right voice makes the animators' job so much easier."

The Music

Although music has been an important part of animated features since Disney's *Snow White*, the art of writing music for an animated film went through a rebirth with the score by Allen Menken and the late Howard Asherman for *The Little Mermaid*. In too many animated features, song sequences seemed to be forced into the narrative of a film with the story grinding to a halt.

The Little Mermaid used its music numbers to advance the plot or reveal something about the characters, and since that time the music has been not only an important creative aspect of the film, but also a crucial

commercial consideration. The fact that Elton John's music in *The Lion King* spurred on CD sales to astonishing heights wasn't lost on the film industry either.

When Clements and Musker began writing the script for *Hercules*, they were not sure if Menken would be available as he had responsibilities on other films. "He had a really full plate," said Clements.

Menken was indeed available, and with lyricist David Zippel, began working on the film's music. "It's a very collaborative process; a real give-and-take," described Musker, who noted that Menken was willing to scrap a song if it didn't precisely fit the film.

The last two movies Allen did, *Pocahontas* and *Hunchback*, were more classically oriented and we thought the *Hercules* story would be more pop oriented," said Clements. For instance, the Muses, the Greek goddesses of the arts, act as a Greek chorus (no pun intended) who sing gospel and R&B flavored songs.

Some people had suggested the film makers use an adaptation of traditional Greek music for the film, something Clements and Musker rejected as they believed the movie's "American sports hero / rags-to-riches" storyline needed a contemporary American score.

The Challenge of *Hercules*

Hercules' summer release will be a first for Musker and Clements. The team's past films were all released during the Thanksgiving season, and the shift in releasing strategy doesn't have the two worried, but certainly concerned.

"I think there's enough room to go around," said Musker. "I think one thing we had in the winter slot is that Disney had a corner on the market, but *Lion King* was released in the summer and carved out a huge part of the general audience."

In the past few years, the key summer releasing period has become an ever increasing high pressure time with studios banking on expensive special effects-laden films to attract audiences. While the Disney marketing department is no doubt one of the juggernauts of the motion picture business, the fact that audiences didn't respond to *Pocahontas* and *Hunchback of Notre Dame* in the same way as they had reacted to *Aladdin*, *The Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast* hasn't gone unnoticed. The company launched a pre-



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release campaign centering around a traveling exhibit which toured large shopping malls, and a collection of *Hercules* merchandising (which is cleverly spoofed in the film) will be awaiting fans.

Clements noted that the competition between the event movies is intimidating, and said "You never really know what's going to happen. Our goal is for the movie to work and we feel that it does."



"You know if you bump me off you still have Belle, Jasmine, Cinderella, Ariel"

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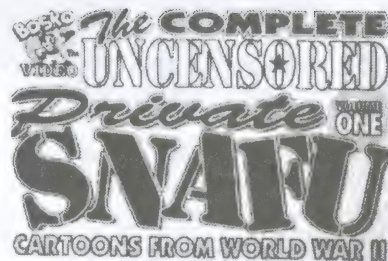


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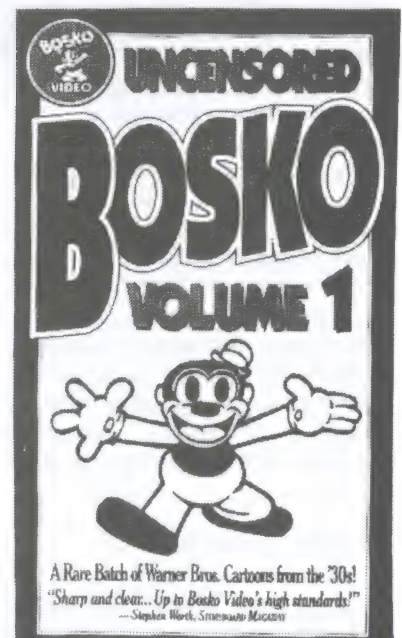


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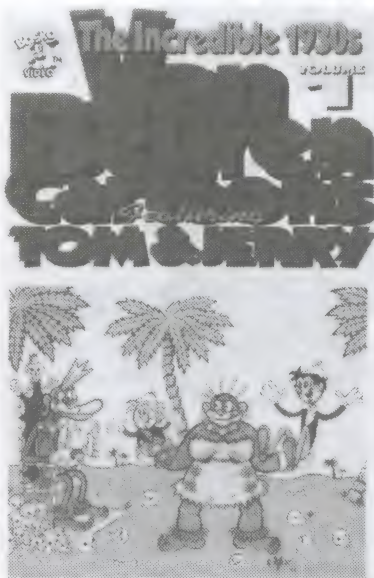
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RAGING RUDOLPH, GUMBOY AND THE SON OF GOLIATH: INSIDE MAD TV ANIMATION

By Chuck Miller

Every Christmas, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, and his friends Herbie the Dentist Elf and Yukon Cornelius, help save Christmas in an award-winning Rankin-Bass animated special.

Except in 1995... when Rudolph and his paisans, Herbie the Drill and Yukon Corneleone, take over Santa's toy making business by eliminating Santa and his gang of elves.

What happened? Well, as the scongili-munching snowman host says, pull up an icepick - er - um - an iceblock, and I'll tell you a story.

Corky Quakenbush was fascinated by the Rudolph special. As a boy, he watched *Rudolph* and the *Davey and Goliath* series, wondering how clay and puppets could move on screen with no wires, no sticks, with virtually seamless three-dimensional animation. "I saw *Davey and Goliath* when I was six, and it was the only cartoon show on Sunday mornings, the only show we could relate to. Even when I was six, I could see that they were cartoons, but there was something three-dimensional about them, that you could touch, if you could, and it fascinated me. Then, when I saw *Rudolph* - the Rankin-Bass Rudolph, I became even more fascinated. Those two things drove me to find out more about it. And when I was about 12 years old, I saw a documentary on PBS about a guy who went into the New York City schools and taught kids how to animate. He put paper cutouts on the table and moved things around and snapped two frames for each movement. I heard that and I was shocked - that's how they did it."

So he asked his parents for his own Super 8mm movie camera - with a single-frame attachment. At the age of 13, Corky Quakenbush was making movies. Within a few years, his clay animation appeared on *Haywire*, a low-rated Fox sketch comedy show. "One of my good friends is Kevin Bright, who is the executive producer of *Friends*, he also worked on the pilot of *In Living Color*. *Haywire* hadn't been doing that well, so they brought in Kevin to try to reorganize the show a little bit. What he did was change the format and brought in an ensemble cast, and had me doing some animation. I had a couple of animated pieces in every show, at least one. I then received



some visibility on a show called *Kamikaze*, which was on MTV, and I was also part of an MTV special project called *Cartoon Sushi*."

One of Quakenbush's earliest characters was Ricardo, a slow-witted boy who could look at Madonna's *Sex* book and wonder why everybody had their clothes off. Ricardo first appeared on *Haywire*, then went to *Kamikaze* and *Cartoon Sushi*. By now, Quakenbush had created a promotional reel of his best animation, and sent the tape around the various Hollywood outlets.

"My reel was sent over to Leslie Collins at Fox Alternative and Late Night Programming, she saw it and said something was good here, and she sent it to the producers of *Mad TV*. They really loved all my stuff, they wanted to start licensing stuff I've already done. That was fine with me. Unfortunately, the executive producers from QED Productions (the company that makes *Mad TV*), since they found me late in the process, they had already shot one of their shows, and as far as they were concerned, they didn't have any money left over for extra things. And then in November I got a call from a couple of the writers that I knew already that were on the show. They asked me if I could do a parody of the Rankin-Bass *Rudolph*. They said we want you to do this one thing so we can show them how good it could be. I said sure. We did that for just about nothing - more of a gratis project than anything else."

So Quakenbush and his company, Space Bass Productions, produced *Raging Rudolph*, a retelling of the Rankin-Bass *Rudolph* as if directed by Martin Scorsese. In *Raging Rudolph*, our hero conspires with a renegade elf, "Herbie the Drill" (who left because he wouldn't pay Santa protection money), to take over the Christmas toy operation. They

cement their unholy alliance by singing a duet:

We'll get even
We'll get even
We'll make Santa pay
We'll make calls
We'll break balls
So we'll get our cut some day

Raging Rudolph became an immediate hit - it was even rebroadcast during a prime-time compilation of the best of *Mad TV*. Director Martin Scorsese loved *Raging Rudolph* so much that he

sent a complimentary letter to Quakenbush. "The cast is great, they really love the stuff I do and I really love working with them. Their contribution is fantastic. Phil LaMarr, for instance, and Dave Herman, our 'voice chameleon' - they're able to just go off in a moment's notice to create different voices. I use all the cast in my pieces, but it seems that Phil and Dave tend to the bulk of the work, because I think they have so much in their repertoire. But everybody - Orlando Jones, Mary Scheer, Nicole Sullivan - they're all talented. Bryan Callen did a fantastic Joe Pesci impersonation for *Raging Rudolph*."

Fueled by the success of *Raging Rudolph*, Quakenbush aimed his cameras at another stop-motion animated project, *Davey and Goliath*. In the *Mad TV* clip, *Davey and Son of Goliath*, Davey is an emotionally psychotic youth who, with the guidance of an evil Goliath ("Davey, it's time to cleanse the neighborhood Davey, I need more blood.") shoots people in their parked cars. It was the David Berkowitz "Son of Sam" crime spree transmogrified into the cartoon. "I really didn't think *Davey and Son of Goliath* would get so much attention, but it got accepted in the Sundance Film Festival this year. Davey actually came around through the back door. I've gotten a lot of good feedback from that one. How do I capture the essence of this program, and how do I get the characters to act like the originals; that's the essence of making the satire work, is to be able to find the heart and soul of the characters. It's ironic that the first two things I did for *Mad TV* were parodying those first two things that inspired me to get into animation."

For his next project, *Gumboy* (a satire of the *Gumby* show), Quakenbush sent the little green guy and his orange horse into the

"Clayboy" mansion, where "Huge Heifer" tricks Gumboy into drinking some electric Kool-Aid. Suddenly the "Claymate of the Month" that Gumboy was ogling earlier has the face of Alfred E. Newman, and Gumboy's having one heck of a bad acid trip.

Because the *Raging Rudolph* and *Davey and Son of Goliath* episodes were enthusiastically received by *Mad TV* viewers, Fox promoted *Gumboy* in commercials for *Mad TV*. "By the time *Davey and Son of Goliath* came out, they became aware that these pieces were kind of signature pieces of the show, and that they kept getting big responses, at that point they started using them as promotions, too. Which of course was exciting for me. We borrowed some characters from *Davey and Son of Goliath* in the Clayboy mansion. Davey's dad was the bartender, and a couple of people who got shot in the cars were in the hot tub. I work with a couple of really great artists, and they began calling me the Roger Corman' of clay animation, because I utilize everything many times."

People were now scrutinizing Quakenbush's clips, looking for hidden messages, in-jokes and tributes. In *Chevrad*, a spoof of the talking Chevron cars, two characters that look suspiciously like Wallace and Grommit can be seen in the background. "That was quite a lot of fun, because those Chevron commercials are produced by a Animation, where Nick Parks works. So we imitated Nick Parks' style, and we included cameo appearances by Wallace and Grommit-type characters. I wanted to do that for all the Nick Parks fans. It would be an inside joke, and only the people that know Nick Parks' characters know this."

With the 1996-97 season of *Mad TV*, Quakenbush has skewered Disney/Pixar's *Toy Story* (*Sex Toy Story*, with "Buzz Light Touch" as the new plaything going "to infinity - and beyond"), the California Raisins (who were actually Quislings that made money by selling their brethren to a cereal manufacturer), and the Bud Bowl (in *Vud Bowl V*, the beer bottles prepare for a football game - and crash into each other, leaving broken bottles all over the field - "I can't feel my label!" one fractured bottle screams). "Nobody really over there has been used to dealing with animation too much, and the whole script approval process is a long drawn out process, so generally I get the final okay in the script. I begin each piece about three weeks to a month before delivery, so I have usually about a month from the time they say go to the time I have to turn in my 3 - 4 minute film."

Rudolph and his crew made another



Corky Quakenbush

appearance, this time in *The Reinfather*, bringing Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* movies into the North Pole. Rudolph, now sounding like a cotton-cheeked Marlon Brando, is in the middle of a frozen tundra war with the other reindeer families. His top lieutenant, Yukon Brazi (formerly Yukon Cornelius - er - Corneleone) gets massacred at a toll booth. One of Rudolph's rivals finds a polar bear's head in his bed. And at the baptism of a new toy (where the clergyman asks Rudolph if he renounces the Grinch and all his Grinchy teachings), Rudolph's allies massacre the elves that killed Yukon Brazi. "At the time, my daughter Chloe was three years old, and it was pretty embarrassing hearing her singing around the house, 'We'll get even, we'll get even, we'll make Santa pay.' So we have to convince her that the Rudolph she should see at her age is the Rankin-Bass one, not my' version. As she becomes morally aware, we try to steer her away from some of our more adult-oriented stuff, in case she doesn't get it. We enjoy a wide ability to satirize things in this country. The First Amendment gives us the right to satirize things - the rules are that something can't be such a match that people mistake it for the original, and we have a lot of latitude about what we can and can't do. We push the envelope a little but, but we're not out to make enemies. We're just trying to have some fun. I grew up with *Mad Magazine*, it was one of my favorite magazines, and when I heard about *Mad TV*, I said this is my show, this is what I want to do."

The success of Quakenbush's *Mad TV* projects have allowed him to create other animated programs, which currently tour in festivals. "*Mad TV* has been the highest-profile show I've ever been involved with. The fans have been great, and we've had a great response from the viewers. It's kind of an underground thing, that's where I felt my core audience was anyway, because I tend to do things that are edgy and not completely socially acceptable. I also have a piece floating around in the Spike and Mike animation festival this year. That's called *A Common Condom Complaint*, a one-minute rant by this condom who wakes up in the gutter and feels miserable because he's been yanked off and thrown in the gutter and treated with disrespect."

Currently Quakenbush is still creating films for *Mad TV*, finding new targets to skewer (at the time of this article, an episode featuring Thomas the Tank Engine is in development). He also hopes to produce the first stop-motion weekly prime-time series for Fox. "I've been hooked up with a writer named Alan Spencer (who created the cult classic *Sledge Hammer!*). It's the story of these two teenage boys that live in a small town on the outskirts of Las Vegas, and it's their exploration of life - but it's still as twisted as - it's bits and sketches, sort of like *The Simpsons*. That's what we'd like to do."

Spawning Ground

Todd McFarlane's hit comic book character makes to animation in the new HBO series



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by Bob Miller

The stigma of Saturday morning is that cartoons are just for kids. Indeed, it's a perception that's attached itself to most cartoons made in America, thanks to network censorship and studios unwilling to take creative risks. It's been an uphill struggle for progressive artists and writers to prove that animation is more than baby fodder, that it can appeal to adults, as well.

Fortunately, the strictures of the regular commercial networks can be bypassed. Home video, cable and prime time television has provided a new venue in which animation can be made for mature audiences.

It's an exciting new frontier for Eric Radomski, who is spearheading HBO's involvement in the adult animation arena. Radomski first came into prominence as a producer-director on *Batman: The Animated Series* and later, the first season of *Freakazoid!* Now, he's supervising director of HBO Animation's first two series, Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* and Ralph Bakshi's *Spicy*.

In an interview conducted February 18, 1997, Eric discussed his upcoming series and the impact he hopes they'll make in breaking the stigma of animation being "just for kids."

HOW AND WHEN DID HBO DECIDE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANIMATION?

HBO had optioned *Spawn* two-and-a-half years ago. They optioned the Bakshi project at approximately the same time. The plans were to subcontract it and they were going to air it late night, which is what the plan is, now.

The subcontractor didn't work out. They ended up losing a chunk of money with no real producible product. So, HBO started their own animation division.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE FORMATION OF THE STUDIO?

Well, actually, it was through a friend, Russell Brower, a sound effects editor that had worked with us on *Batman*.

Catherine Winder, the producer of *Spawn/Spicy* and now vice president of the studio, mentioned in a meeting with Russell that she was looking for a director and Russell brought up my name to supervise *Spawn* and Bakshi. Fortunately my contract with Warners was just about over.

She and I talked with Carmi Zlotnik, the official president of the animation division. He's also head of production for HBO original programming, and starting an animation studio for HBO was his brainchild.

WHAT INTERESTED HIM IN STARTING UP AN ANIMATION UNIT AT HBO?

He had it in his mind for quite a long time that animation for adults was a market that was untapped.

The immediate projects themselves were interesting enough but they weren't the only reason for me to go to HBO. I was more interested in the potential of HBO Animation for this untapped market.

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT HBO'S PHILOSOPHY ABOUT ANIMATION THAT APPEALED TO YOU?

They were serious about doing programming that definitely appealed to an adult market. That was the big sales point for me.

You'll get the occasional rogue director that pushes the limits. Certainly *Ren & Stimpy* went to the limit, and they were able to convey that classic Tom & Jerry/Looney Tunes/Tex Avery sort of extremes, and that's great. But, you shouldn't have to fight for those things. Those are inherent in cartoons.

WHAT PRECISELY CAN'T YOU DO ON THE COMMERCIAL NETWORKS?

Gross jokes, farts, boogers, nudity, guns — that sort of thing is frowned upon.

It's not to be graphic and gratuitous, but you shouldn't have to pull punches. That you can stretch a guy's eyeballs out and let them smash into his head and push him down the stairs. Those things are funny. It's what made *Laurel & Hardy* funny; it's what made *The Three Stooges* funny. Those are the things that you have to be very careful about, with the standard commercial networks.

Some studios and networks are trying to push that again, because they know that everything's become sort of bland. But it's always a fight to get there. I don't want to be bothered with having to think about that. I want to be challenged with coming up with new, clever ways of doing those sorts of gags, to make them funny and good, and not have to worry about some crotchety old censor going,

'Oh, my god, that offends my religion.' Or, 'That's not the way I want my kid to see that cartoon.' Well, tough. Then don't let them watch it.

WHY CHOOSE SPAWN AS A PROJECT?

Spawn has been successful as a comic book and as a toy line. It's a natural progression into film. The feature will be coming out at the end of the summer, and it's going to have a 'PG-13' rating. Here we have an animated show, and it's 'R'-rated. It's for late night, and it's something totally original for the market. You don't see 'R'-rated animation produced for the American market.

WHAT ABOUT SPICY?

Spicy is a loose spoof of the pulp magazines of the '40s. It's a comedic poke at how melodramatic and bizarre those stories were. We're producing it in a broad cartoon fashion. It has a dark, dramatic sort of feel to it, and yet there's comedy involved. They're goofy-looking cartoon characters in funky adult situations, blended with a sexy jazzy beat.

We examine subjects like cloning, love on the Internet and virtual sex. It's an area that no one's ever drifted into in the animated realm because of the subject matter.

Our shows are animated, but that's not a precursor to what we do. We're going for projects based on good stories, good ideas, and for something you wouldn't see on typical commercial television. If you could create it like a *Simpsons*, certainly HBO wouldn't look down on it because of its success, but we're going above that. We want to take that to the level where, no, you have to edit this to show it on Fox at 8:00. That's what's defining us from other studios and other creative entities. We really want to do things that can only be seen on HBO.

IS THE BUDGET COMPARABLE TO WHAT YOU HAD ON BATMAN?

Yes it is. I don't know a specific dollar amount, but I know that it's very comparable to *Batman*.

Once we've proved ourselves as a studio, and depending on the project itself, those budgets will increase and allow us to enhance the quality of our shows even more.

There's so many things in development and we're always looking for something unique. Uniqueness costs money, if it doesn't fit into the mold. We're approaching each of our projects with a six-episode startup. And if it does well, then it's going to be picked up for another six. We never jump in any deeper than that.

HOW DID YOU TRANSLATE SPAWN

FROM THE COMIC BOOK TO ANIMATION?

I wanted to maintain as much of the integrity of the comic book as possible in animation (for pencil mileage and consistency).

SO YOU HAD TO SIMPLIFY THE CHARACTER.

Yes. We had to simplify it from the book, but we also kept it fairly realistic. Todd McFarlane wanted kind of a Japanese style to it, because that's his experience with animation, and he obviously leans toward Japanese features, which are more adult, more dramatic, more violent.

We kind of swiped from a comic artist, Mike Mignola, and even back to Alex Toth, with real heavy black shadows on the characters, and carried that consistently through the series.

WHAT APPROACHES OR METHODS FROM BATMAN DID YOU APPLY TO SPAWN?

The idea that we're not going to talk down to the audience. *Spawn's* storyline and visuals are very rough and dramatic. I pushed the limit even further with extreme camera angles.

The reason *Batman* was successful was, we didn't talk down to the audience. We always tried to produce an intelligent show for ourselves and for the audience in general. It was sophisticated and well-animated, but, we weren't going to pull punches. And the only punches that were pulled were the censor concerns with the network. Anytime we wanted to push the limits and the jeopardy to raise the drama, we always had to be careful in



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the way we depicted things.

If you want an audience to believe the story you can't fool them. You've got to give them what they're expecting. There's got to be real adult themes going on and you've got to be willing to risk pushing the limit. Otherwise everyone's just going to go, 'Wasn't that tree convenient that he fell into?' Or, 'We knew there was no chance in the world that Batman was ever going to be hit by that bullet.'

WHY USE A LIVE-ACTION APPROACH?

It's pushes the level of storytelling. We always made a hard and fast effort not to do standard fare, but to always try and surprise you with a transition, or to use *Batman* in a way that's not so literal. Let a cape swipe be a transition but also a big part of the action in the midst of a fight. That sort of mentality. Never let ourselves fall into a linear storyline. We always try to allow the audience to think that we set it up; it does pay off story-wise, but it's not linear.

That's a hard-and-fast effort to keep you guessing, to leave you wanting more, so that



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when you come to Episode #2, you want to know what happened to Tony Twist from the previous episode.

It's the same approach I would take with *Batman* if I was to do it again, but I would push the psychological aspect of *Batman* more than the action-adventure side, where *Spawn* is definitely getting into his head and his predicament, and less about how he fights and how he looks standing atop a building. This is more about what he's thinking about and how he's going to solve his situation.

We did some of that in *Batman*. We got some of the angst of whining over his parents' death, but it became a pattern. That happens with any 65-episode series, where it becomes methodical. There's a crime committed; *Batman* gets involved. He figures out how to approach things and he fights with the bad guys and then he has a resolve at the end. That became the pattern for *Batman*. That's not a bad thing; that's the way things go.

Spawn has been treated almost as a miniseries. It's a six-episode arc. You will get A, B and C storylines throughout, and some things you'll just have to wait until

Episode 3 and 4 to know what happened to the guy you saw in Episode 1. By the end of Episode 6, that storyline has closure, but it also leaves things open for the next six episodes and leaves the audience wanting more.

Again, it's a deliberate attempt to raise the level of our storytelling for our audience. *Spawn* is more like a psychological drama than an action-adventure show.

KIND OF SOUNDS LIKE *THE MAXX*. BECAUSE THAT WAS A PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA.

Yes. But *The Maxx* was also

esoteric. You had to really pay attention in order to relate to it and figure out what was going on. Unless you want to just sit back and be entertained, because it was a very cool show. Some of those flashbacks were interesting to look at, but you had to really figure out what the hell they're talking about.

IS *SPAWN* A STRAIGHTFORWARD ADAPTATION OF THE COMICS?

Not really. The first three-and-a-half scripts were written with Todd McFarlane and with writer Alan McElroy, which I think Todd had gone through a couple of writers prior to him.

It was loosely based on the original comic book, but we certainly gave our own spin on the storylines.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS TODD MCFARLANE INVOLVED?

From the inception of the project, Todd has always been involved. He worked closely with the writers in setting up the premises of the storyline for the first six episodes.

In preproduction, he received all of the

main character designs, props, and background designs for his approval and signed off on the art direction.

Todd hasn't always been available because he's involved with a lot of different companies involving *Spawn*. But he's always there. He always had a good take on things. He's open to our changes when we divert from the comic. He was fine with that as long as it played better, or he felt that the argument was strong enough for it.

WHO IS THE COMPOSER?

Shirley Walker, who did our *Batman* series. It's very appropriate for Shirley's style, because she's definitely high drama. She's worked with Hans Zimmer quite a bit, and he's big on the synthesized versions, so she works with musicians that understand it as well. She's writing music as she traditionally does, but we're using a synthesized, atmospheric approach to it all. I was fortunate that she was interested in working on the project with us.

WHO IS DOING THE SOUND EFFECTS?

Craig Berkey is the sound effects editor. He comes from a feature background.

DID HE CREATE NEW SOUND EFFECTS, AS BEN BURTT DID FOR *STAR WARS*?

The sound effects, in large part, are a lot of recycled stuff. We're dealing with alleys in the city and police, so you hear a lot of that sort of thing, but there is quite a lot of original creations in terms of *Spawn*'s cape, *Spawn*'s chains, the way that we keep that alley alive when it's not filled with music. It's got an industrial-quality type of sound. We approached it with the idea that everybody in America has this surround sound system so we don't pull any punches. The sound effects are really striking and dramatic.

WHO IS DOING THE OVERSEAS ANIMATION?

Koko. They are now kind of an umbrella company to five or six different animation studios in Korea.

The individual studio is Sheen Productions. But they had an "A" and "B" crew for us, and the "A" crew did an incredible job and the "B" crew did an incredibly crappy job, and by Episode 6 we had the "A" team supervising the "B" team, and we managed to pull it together fairly well, but it was a little bit of a surprise for us, because we had two episodes that needed a lot of retake work, and they just didn't stand up to the quality of the other four. But, they blended in well, in terms of the overall series.

HOW ABOUT THE VOICE CAST?

The voice casting was done prior to me

coming to the studio, before the studio existed, because the first go-round with the subcontracted studio didn't turn out.

I inherited the first two-and-a-half recordings. I say 'half' because scripts were done but they were edited by me and another person at the studio to bring them up to speed for recording.

The casting was done by Jack Fletcher, who's out of San Francisco and had worked with Catherine on *Aeon Flux*. So he brought in his talent pool and access to talent. He actually had an acting school in San Francisco. Just a really great guy. He just knows how to funnel three different requests from myself and Catherine and Todd, into one direction, making it simpler for an actor.

The actors were chosen prior to me. That involved Todd and Jack and Catherine. The level of actors is really good. It was treated the same way we did *Batman*, where we tried to get a live-action attitude and approach to the stories. We brought in skilled actors because we wanted a live-action approach to the stories.

AS OPPOSED TO THE STANDARD —

Yes. Absolutely. We avoided getting any cartoony sorts of voices. If we had anybody who's done cartoony stuff before, the same as we did with *Batman*, we direct them specifically not to go too broad. Just play it very serious and realistic. And that's the way it comes off.

DID YOU GO FOR NAME VALUE IN THE CAST?

HBO has a definite interest in doing that. Richard Dysart is probably the most notable of the cast. Richard is the old sage, Cogliostro, and he's great.

Spawn himself is Keith David, who has done a lot of stage in New York, live action movies, and he was the voice of the lead Gargoyle [Goliath] in Disney's *Gargoyles*.

The incidental players have all had experience in live action television, movies, plays, and they're just all very very good at what they do. We don't have much difficulty in recording these shows at all, 'cause it seems to be a natural read for them. They keep their thinking in terms of this being almost radio. They're reading it as a stage play and playing the emotion and the seriousness of it. It really helps the animation feel real.

I'M CURIOUS. THERE SEEMS TO BE A CHANGE IN THE INDUSTRY WHERE THEY'RE HIRING MORE LIVE-ACTION ACTORS TO DO ANIMATION VOICES —

Yes.

—INSTEAD OF ACTORS WHO DO JUST VOICE-OVERS FOR A LIVING, WHO ARE

ABLE TO PROJECT CHARACTER THROUGH THEIR VOICE. ISN'T IT A RISK TO HAVE LIVE-ACTION PEOPLE WHO DON'T DO THAT PRIMARILY FOR A LIVING?

I think it certainly is if you cast them. But, if you go through a casting call and you know what you're looking for, you know immediately if you cast that person whether they're going to be able to come up to the plate, and do what you need to do.

I don't know if this applies across the board for every project. Certainly in broader comedies, you're going to want someone who has the ability to be more comedic. That doesn't mean you get someone who does a wacky sort of voice that sounds *kind* of like Bugs and Daffy. Those are awful to me.

Maybe a fair comparison would be Ren and Stimpy, with John Kricfalusi doing the voice of Ren; Stimpy with Billy West. Billy West would be considered more a live-action actor; he's a radio guy and he just has that unique voice that sounds cartoony but it's also very serious read to the stories that he's doing. It doesn't sound forced; it doesn't sound, 'Oh, I'm just putting out a wacky voice.' No. He was that character. And the same with John. John was Ren. I don't think John would consider himself a cartoon voiceover. He was an actor in that role and he played Ren and he knew what that character was.

A lot of people in the positions of casting voices in cartoons are not really animation people. They don't have that education that all of us have had of watching cartoons when we were kids, relating to the Stooges and to

Laurel & Hardy and Chaplin. They're making decisions based on, 'Oh, that's a funny-sounding voice.'

Well, then you miss the point. If you push it to be goofy, to be comedic or over-the-top, it's so fake. You could notice it a mile away.

Bugs will never be Bugs again. You can get someone to sound like him but he's never going to have the personality that he had. Because that personality was Mel. And there's no way around that.

When you're casting, it's more an effort to get an actor that can play the personality of the character you're trying to convey. It does me no good to get a guy who's got this long track record of great voices that he's done for Disney. Yeah, but in every show he sounds like the same character. And you try and put him into a show, and he sounds like the same character because that's what he does. There's never that standout where you go, 'Wow, that's great.'

Keith David did the *Gargoyle* voice [Goliath]. I didn't see much of the show, but of the ones I did, I remember it as being a deep resonant voice, but the performance and the storylines were standard action-adventure sort of high drama. [Melodramatically.] 'I push to be this tough guy.' Where in *Spawn* it's, 'No, just be an actor. You are this guy who is murdered and now you're back in reality and you're trying to figure it out. Just be an actor and do that.' So his voice is natural.

I would never put a format on casting and say, 'I want a cartoony guy.' I would just as soon do it like they do for opera or stage. Just



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put the people behind the curtain and let them read the voice. I don't want to see them; I don't want to know their track record. I want them to know who their character is and do the voice. If it works, then it's golden. If it doesn't, then you get standard fare.

That's the way I want to do my projects. I don't want actors just for name value. You bring the guy in if he's appropriate for that character.

WHAT DO WE GET TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN THE FIRST AND SECOND SEASONS?

The first season is a backstory for the audience that hasn't seen the character.

In Episode #1, you understand that Spawn was murdered and he wakes up in the alleyway. He has no idea how he got there or who he is or what he's about, and knows he is going by his instincts in terms of making decisions at this point.

So, there's trouble in the alley. He reacts as he did in life as a mercenary, and he takes care of the situation. The cape comes into play and the chains come into play and he has no control over it. It's part of his resolve of a violent situation going on around him.

In the midst of that you've got A, B, and C storylines. The Government is involved with his assassination. They have to make sure things are quiet so that no one realizes they've murdered one of their own. So you've got the Mob involved because they're keeping the Government, photographers, and journalists quiet. It plays into the whole realm of intrigue and cloak-and-dagger sorts of storylines.

Episode #2 is the investigation. Burke and Twitch are the detectives in this precinct of New York, and they're assigned to this alley, which suddenly is this hub of violent activity. They try to figure out what is going on. They know that it's involved with the mob, somehow. They've got another homeless dead guy but they don't know who he is, but they know this is not your ordinary killing.

Episode #3: The Mob is now aware that there's a problem in the alley. They don't know what it is but they're going to call in their heavy hitter, again from the comic: Overkill, which is a big cyborg half-human, half robot character. Again, we try to play him as realistic as we can. He's a big, brutal nasty guy. We keep him in the shadows most often, but you see that he's fitted with some armature. We're trying to avoid it becoming too super-heroey.

There's a child abduction case that's going on that Burke and Twitch are looking into. They're finding the bodies of kids dumped into this alley, and they don't know why. Spawn certainly is piqued by this, but he doesn't know if he's supposed to do anything

about it, and he's trying to figure out what this is all about.

Episode #3 gives us a little bit of the Government coverup to the child killings, because a Government official's son is involved with this abduction case.

In Episode #4 we introduce Angela, who is from the comic, and is supposedly the opposing anti-hero to Spawn. She's from Heaven. She's a Spawn-killer. Every time a new Spawn is born, Heaven has to come to Earth's aid to avoid things getting too out of hand. We won't see her again until the second season.

In Episode #5, we have another encounter with Spawn and a CIA photographer that's trying to track down Wanda, who was Al Simmons's wife in life. Now she's remarried to Al Simmons's friend, and she's doing some of her own undercover investigation to the child killings. She's basically the appointed attorney for a character who's I.D.'d as the child-killer but she proves that he's not the child-killer. It's been a Government coverup to expose one character as the killer and she's out to prove that it's not.

Episode #5 is kind of a departure episode where it's another opportunity for the Clown to take on a new incarnation to taunt Spawn. He comes back in the form of a street preacher, dragging around a little boy who happens to be mute. It plays into the whole deception of, could this guy be the child-killer? What's going on? It ends up being just another tool for the Clown to twist the knife into Spawn, and see how he's going to react.

In the midst of that we still have references to the Tony Twist storyline and his involvement with Spawn. Tony attempts to escape from what he owes to the Government because the Government has set him up for dealing with the situation that has been totally been screwed up by Spawn. Tony Twist is trying to get away from the whole situation because he's scared of Spawn.

By Episode #6 we start resolving the child murder case, the Government's involvement in guns being stolen. Midway through the series, Spawn goes back to his instincts and actually breaks into an ammo stronghold for the Government and steals a bunch of weapons because he thinks he can use these as protection. He thinks he'll deal with his opponents with a gun. And yet, he has these supernatural powers. He has no idea of what they're all about, but his natural reaction is to use a gun. Once that Government division is infiltrated, the CIA director says, 'We have to get what's in the alley; he's going to screw everything up for us and uncover our covert operation.' So it becomes more involved and intriguing.

Spawn finally confronts the true child-killer and has to make a decision on whether

or not he's going to take justice into his own hands. By the end of the episode you see him actually have a meeting with Cyan, the little girl that is Wanda's daughter. It's not his daughter, but it's the daughter that he'll never have. He gives her a memento that reminds his wife of who he is. By the end of that episode, she's left to wonder, 'Oh my god, how did you get this? Where did this come from? Is he still alive?'

That's kind of the way we leave the episode: Spawn is now aware of what he's done, and what has happened to him. He gets flashback experiences through the episode: the fact that he was murdered, that he had something to do with being a mercenary, and that now he had to make some personal decision as to whether he would be involved in the Government coverup with the child kidnapping. They are all emotional struggles for him because he's still trying to figure out what he's all about. Yet he's wondering, 'This isn't my problem. Why do I have to deal with this?' This is the ultimate test between good and evil.

That's basically the first six. The second six will still have A, B and C storylines, but they'll be dealing with individual storylines, more like Episode #5 of the first season. The overall thread through the episodes is the storyline between Spawn and Chapel, who was Al Simmons' partner in their mercenary activities. Chapel was also the guy who killed Spawn. Chapel comes to terms with the deception of his best friend, murdering his best friend, and essentially will lose his mind in the second six.

WHEN IS THE SERIES SCHEDULED TO BEGIN?

The first episode will air at midnight on May 16, and will continue running Friday nights at midnight. They also are intending on dropping everything into video, and just trying to figure out a strategy on how to market an R-rated video that happens to be animated.

AND THE SECOND SEASON WILL BEGIN —?

Next spring. This March we'll start preproduction. We're already considering redevelopment on our preproduction materials just so we can solve some of the problems we had in the first season, overseas.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE SERIES SO FAR?

In terms of the first six episodes, and the barriers we had to get this production done, setting up a new studio and pulling in new

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The End of Saturday Morning?

No cartoons on Saturday morning? Producer John Cawley gives ANIMATION PLANET an insider's view

by Bob Miller

Are Saturday morning cartoons headed for extinction? Recent developments suggest a sobering scenario, with CBS giving up cartoons as its Saturday morning staple. The Federal Government is forcing commercial broadcasters to air educational programs, three hours a week, the type of shows that motivate kids to turn the channel. With fewer viewers, the remaining commercial networks are reconsidering whether it's profitable to keep producing cartoons while the audience is fragmented among a growing number of cable networks.

Discussing the situation is John Cawley, coordinating producer on *Spider-Man* and animation authority. He has written numerous books in the field, such as *The Animated Films of Don Bluth*. With Jim Korkis he co-authored *Cartoon Confidential*, *The Encyclopedia of Cartoon Superstars*, and *How to Create Animation*. Cawley had developed and edited *Animation News*, which evolved into *Animation Magazine*. Cawley's production credits include *An American Tail*, *Garfield and Friends*, *Bobby's World* and *Cro*. He also serves on the Board of Directors of ASIFA-Hollywood, the International Animated Film Society.

Cawley: With the FCC getting harder on the networks with the educational programming and educational programming not delivering ratings, you are seeing networks question whether or not they want to remain in Saturday morning.

NBC left official Saturday morning programming years ago and went with live action sitcoms for teenagers in which actually often bring in better overall ratings than Saturday morning cartoons do. You don't see them usually on the ratings because the ratings for Saturday morning cartoons are for ages three through eight, where they get a big rating. But if you look at the general overall morning ratings and forget the age groups, the Saturday morning cartoons actually do less than the NBC shows.

CBS is taking a real beating in the ratings and they've indicated they want to do a two-hour news program, more like info-tainment for children which would help fill up the FCC's requirements for three hours. CBS just basically feels it couldn't do any worse in the ratings.

Cable is getting higher ratings which is good, but the only cable really doing well is Nickelodeon — which has a fair amount of animation but is a very low priced animation studio. Nickelodeon has been upping their budgets but they are still paying less for the shows than any of the major networks are paying.

What you're going to see happen is less expensive animation for television. For a while the big studios could pour more money in this project but within a year or two if they don't start seeing some income for it, it's not going to make enough money to succeed.

ANIMATION PLANET: You're talking about the educational shows.

Cawley: No, I'm talking about any shows. Educational shows will just be done on a shoestring. Every so often the networks will put on a documentary about hunger in some country to show they're public service-oriented. The broadcast networks are owned by the public, so to serve the public they have to do certain things. This is the programming you often find in Sunday mornings. These are in bad rating times, so they know they are going to lose. They'll put on something that is public service-oriented.

ANIMATION PLANET: This doesn't apply to cable.

Cawley: No. Cable people are exempt because cable is something you buy. You choose to have cable in your home. The cable company pays for the wire to lay across the street, however they get it to your house. You don't own that. The cable company does and you are buying that. The FCC doesn't handle that. Only over-the-air broadcasting which technically, at this point, is ABC, NBC, CBS. Fox and Warner and UPN are still not official networks because they do not provide enough primetime programming.

According to the official FCC law, a network provides X amount of hours per week. Well at this point those studios have remained under that. If Fox really wanted to push it Fox could say, 'We are not a network and we're not going to do educational programming.' That just wouldn't be very good public relations.

I think you are going to see the landscape of television programming, and animation in particular, shift over these next couple of years. You may see a reduction in the amount

of money and time being spent on these series. They have to make it in the advertising revenue and where the feature film might come out and do so-so or poor, it will make a lot of money on home video.

It's hard to do that in 65 half hours. A kid will buy a movie. Very few kids will buy 65 half hours of TV shows. They'll buy one or two episodes on a tape, maybe have two or three tapes. But, that would be like saying, I'm going to make 25 features and I'll make the money selling two of them. You're not. You're going to have to sell all 25 of them to make at least some money.

ANIMATION PLANET: Do you see an emphasis perhaps towards a larger direct-to-video market?

Cawley: Might be. The whole problem you run into is, animation — and the people who watch it and make it — have been spoiled the last few years because the studios felt the way they get animation going was to pour a lot of money into it. So you see high rates for artists and big budget productions.

However, now the studios are starting to see that they don't always make a lot of money. They don't want to get out of the business because there is money to be made, but if you can't make money on a fifty million dollar production you say, 'OK, well, we'll do a thirty million dollar production and that will make money.'

In some way this goes very close to how they do a lot of animation in Europe. Because then you actually do have the money people officially in charge. They say, 'OK, if we do an animated home feature we can guarantee or generally sell 100,000 copies. So if we sell 100,000 copies and we get \$10 a copy we are making a million dollars. OK, if we make a million dollars, how much can we spend on the feature and still make a profit? Well, if we spent half a million we make half-a-million dollars.' So the budget for the feature becomes half-a-million.

That's how almost all home videos are done. You have to look at how many you think you're going to sell. And you're pretty locked in — unlike a movie where you don't know what you're going to make. I mean, you release a film and it could be a big hit, or it could be a big flop. With children's animation or at least children's home video, there are enough standard numbers that you can usually guesstimate a minimum and unfortunately



Could a show like *Nightmare Ned* be an endangered species? (© Buena Vista Television)

that's all you will aim for.

When you have a feature film you might make a minimum of, say, twenty million at the box office, but then you'll make X amount on home video, and X amount on TV sales, and X amount on this. When you put all that together, your budget becomes something [justifiable]. If you eliminate one of those major cash sources — which for home video direct is the theatrical feature — you are eliminating around, let's say, twenty million dollars of possible profit.

All that matters is the money. If the networks don't think they are going to make as much money, they're not going to spend as much money. So they will have to figure out a way of cutting costs. It might be either going more overseas stuff, or just utilizing cheaper crews, getting more work out of the crews they have, cutting the type of animation they do, and a lot of studios are doing this.

Saban is a good example of a company that literally does very little work in this country and does most of it overseas. Yet a lot of Saban shows are very successful, like *X-Men*.

Disney bought the *Doug* studio, Jumbo, basically to do under-the-street lower-priced animation for TV. That's why they have their studios in Canada, Florida, France, Japan, and in Australia, basically to utilize lower pay scales. I think that is what you are going to see happen. You won't see animation disappear. You're just going to see a lowering of the financial aspects unless somebody else comes along and really starts making a lot of money

again.

When Disney makes it, everybody jumps into it — but no one else is making the money yet. And that is what it's going to take. If a Warners and a Fox feature starts making more money then Warners and Fox will keep pouring more money into it. But Warners has already said they are going to start cutting back on their TV production costs because they are just not making it in TV. All it is going to take is two or three animated features from Warners in the 60 to 80 million range that don't make any money and they are going to say, 'Well, then we will still do features but let's put them more in the 30 million range,' and that puts more stress on the artists.

A lot of these folks hope the new technologies will do it. Digital ink-and-paint has helped some, but in some ways it's very strange. The cheaper technology gets the more complex it gets, in a way, because you expect more from it. With digital ink-and-paint, they always push how you could do effects so easily and how you could do color mattes and things like this.

If you were trying to do digital ink-and-paint on a *Yogi Bear* cartoon from the Sixties you could do that really fast and cheap. Well, no one wants it to look like *Yogi Bear* cartoon from the Sixties. They want it to look all shadowed and shaded and multi-leveled and again that's a lot of computer time.

Yes, they can now it faster, but they are asked to do more complex things which will keep the costs somewhat high, because again you're trying to get a whole work force onto

digital ink- and-paint.

With all the mergers [e.g. Turner merging with Warners] you have less competition, so you're going to start seeing a little bit of downsizing. Just like the rest of the country has been seeing downsizing in the auto industry. Already Warner Bros. has indicated that they don't think they need many people coming over from Turner. Fox has already said they're not going to need too many people from the New World animation divisions. So there'll be a natural reduction.

ANIMATION PLANET: Ratings are down on Saturday mornings while Nickelodeon is actually up a little bit. Cawley: Yes, Nick is up. Very up, actually.

ANIMATION PLANET: What do you account for this?

Cawley: A lot of it is marketing, or what they call 'branding.' And Nickelodeon is a definite brand. You can market it; you can sell it; kids know what Nick is.

When Warners and Paramount UPN both came on at the same time with their Saturday morning programs, Warners' first comment was, 'Well, UPN will fail because all UPN is Saturday mornings. There is no way to promote Saturday mornings anywhere else during the week. Whereas Warners had an afternoon schedule, and while we're running our cartoons in the afternoon we'll say, "Hey kids, watch Saturday morning, too."'

That gives you marketing, because really, if you watch network TV, there are seldom any ads for Saturday morning cartoons. You'll see ads for tomorrow night's movie of the week, or the next episode of *Lois and Clark*, or *Mad About You*, or whatever the shows are on the network. You even see ads about soap operas on prime time: 'Tomorrow, on *One Life To Live*.'

You never see ads for Saturday morning. The only people who know anything about Saturday mornings are those who watch Saturday mornings. Unless you have another market. So, Fox and Warners have afternoons and mornings when kids are watching shows, so they can say, 'Hey, when you're watching *Bobby's World* now, don't forget, we have *Bobby's World* and *Earthworm Jim*,' or whatever on Saturday mornings.

But Nickelodeon has continuous advertising. Nickelodeon is big on Saturday morning mainly because Nickelodeon is a big children's network during the week. Kids come home from school, before kids go to school, kids on vacation sit around and watch Nickelodeon. And all they're being told is, "Watch Nickelodeon, watch Nickelodeon, watch Nickelodeon, watch Nickelodeon. And

so, on Saturday mornings they watch Nickelodeon. They've seen all the ads for the cartoons.

Have they seen ads for *Sylvester and Tweety Mysteries*? Have they seen ads for *Superman*, or *Timon and Pumbaa*? No. They've seen ads for *Ren & Stimpy*, *Doug*, and *Rugrats*, or whatever else they're running at this point. So that's what kids are going to watch.

That is the biggest problem the networks have, is that they've always had promotion on Saturday morning, but usually Saturday morning was like a gimmick. Kids get up and watch Saturday morning. So if you start with a good show or two, they will stay with the network the whole day.

That's why Warners switched their schedule. They thought if they started with maybe stronger adult shows the older kids would get up earlier and watch the shows all through the day. That's not so much a given any more, because there are so many networks. The biggest problem they've got is something like a Cartoon Network or Nickelodeon which kids always know there is always something on for kids.

It's not like, 'Gee, is it 8:00 yet? Have the cartoons started?' Or, 'Gee, it's after 11:00 now and the cartoons are off now because it's NFL football.' It's like, 'I'll just turn on Turner Cartoon Network, or I'll turn on Nickelodeon and I'll get cartoons.'

That is really, I think, the bottom line. The networks are specialized, for the most part. Some are generic. But a lot of your networks, like Discovery Channel, are like magazines that are going to be specialized, and so when you find an audience that's what they turn to. You have an audience that likes to watch cartoons, they're going to turn to Nickelodeon or the Cartoon Network. Then if there's nothing on there, they start channel surfing.

That's your biggest problem when you're a generic [network]. A lot of times you see these big department stores go under because they sell everything. 'Well, I don't want to buy everything. I was looking for a place that sells shoes. Oh, here's a shoe store. I'm looking for a place that sells books. Oh, here's a book store.' So a lot of these big merchandisers have real trouble at times.

That's really what's happening with the networks now. Your major networks are the department stores. 'Oh, we've got soap operas, we've got movies, and we've got specials, and we've got hit shows, we've got hit shows, and we've got this, we've got that.'

But where are they? Like one of the huge warehouse stores. 'Oh, where's the kids department? Where is the soap opera department? Where is the news department?

'Forget this, I'll just go to CNN when I

want to see the news, and I'll just go to Nickelodeon when I want to see cartoons or kids stuff, or I'll just go to the Discovery Channel when I want to see a documentary or I'll go to AMC when I want to see a movie.'

It's like cable TV as the TV mall, versus the networks, which are the TV warehouse. The warehouse has everything, but that means it doesn't have everything all the time.

ANIMATION PLANET: With Warners reversing its schedule, doesn't that affect Broadcast Standards and Practices [the censors], because BS&P was stricter with shows that were earlier in the morning than they were on the shows that were later on Saturday morning?

Cawley: That's technically true, yes. But each network has its own BS&P. Warners' BS&P is very liberal. In fact I would probably say Warners has the most liberal BS&P of the networks. I see things on Warners shows that would get you kicked out of Fox, ABC, and CBS, continually, on their early morning shows, on their late shows.

Sylvester and Tweety Mysteries is supposedly one of their young shows, and I've seen several routines there that we couldn't get on *Spider-Man*. Now, it would be a funny gag, but they make certain comments, or certain allusion to something, or show a certain type of action. We couldn't do that on *Spider-Man*. That would be a big "X" on the script. 'Nope, can't show that, can't say that.'

A good example of something that most networks are always sensitive about is name calling. Because it is very imitable, and it's very cruel. So if you're on a CBS, ABC, or Fox show, and you want to have your character say, 'Hey, fat boy,' or, 'Hey, ugly.' The network says, 'No, no, no, no, that's not really nice because we don't want to make fun of people's differences, and that's bad imitable behavior.'

You watch the Warners network, that's all it is! *The Animaniacs*, *Sylvester and Tweety Mysteries*, and one of the worse offenders is *Freakazoid!* These shows go on all the time: 'Hey, stinky. Hey, you've got a big butt there.' It's continually making cracks about physical and personality traits which on any other network would be tough to get by, but Warners lets them go.

ANIMATION PLANET: On the quest to get more viewers, aren't the BS&P people on all the networks loosening their standards?

Cawley: In theory, no. BS&P can loosen a little bit, but not too much, especially in children's programming, because it's so criticized by everybody. As we all know from reading in the papers, children's programming is the reason for any problem currently in America, whether it is drugs or crime or gangs

or people buying guns, or whatever the problem is. President Clinton was re-elected because of Saturday morning cartoons, 'the source of all evil.' Maybe because it is an easy target. It's very easy to take a cartoon show and find something wrong with it. A rude noise, a violent slap, anything, they say, 'Look, they're showing children that slap people around. No wonder we have kids going to school and shooting each other.'

ANIMATION PLANET: You don't think the V chip will distinguish between slapstick and actual violence?

Cawley: No, the V chip will never get that sophisticated. The movie rating system has trouble doing that sometimes, discerning what would be violent.

A lot of people have said *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* should have been a PG. Because if that had been a live action film, and hadn't had Disney behind it, it would have been a PG movie, because of the implications of sexual desires and some very serious pain scenes: a threat to a young child, throwing a baby in the well. A lot of those things would have instantly popped it into the PG rating. So, it is always hard to tell. It's like saying, 'How dirty is dirty?' Or, 'when do you go from being slapstick to violent?'

In the 80's you always had to discern whether it was fantasy violence, if it was something that was not imitable. Jokey Smurf always gave people bombs that blew up. That's somewhat violent but how many kids are going to have bombs? A kid would not be able to give a friend a bomb that would blow up. So Jokey could do it because it was, even as violent as that may seem. Maybe in today's climate scene it would be totally inappropriate.

But BS&P is, once again, their own division and they do pretty much what they want. But the network can override the BS&P. BS&P is basically kind of like you going to your doctor. Your doctor can say, 'I think you should give up smoking.' And you say, 'Well thank you, Doctor, but I want to keep smoking.' He can give you the advice, that smoking is bad for you, and it causes all these diseases but you're the final decision maker.

To carry the analogy further: You can keep smoking till you die. A TV show can get as violent as it wants to until finally it's taken off because of bad ratings or because of horrifying publicity.

Basically BS&P is used as a guide. They say, 'No, we think this is too violent, or we think this is too big.' But at any point the network can override BS&P and say, 'No, we think this is funny,' or, 'No, we think this is an important show, or this is something that has to be said.' And it happens.

BS&P does not own the network whereas the network owns the BS&P. If the head of

Fox or the head of ABC or something said, 'No, we think it is funny for characters to have their heads cut off and we are going to leave it in the scripts,' then it just goes through production. BS&P will just say it wasn't approved by BS&P.

ANIMATION PLANET: It seems to me that there has been a relaxing of standards.

Cawley: That's right. The networks are having to get edgier. You are seeing things literally on *Timon & Pumbaa* that you wouldn't have seen two or three years ago on network TV.

ANIMATION PLANET: Such as?

Cawley: Actual flatulence.

My favorite example is *Animaniacs*. Every episode of *Animaniacs* is, almost every episode, either has some joke about human waste — 'potty humor' as everybody calls it — and some sort of incredibly adult sexual innuendo, that I think if someone were to sit down at some congressional committee and look through two hours of *Animaniacs* and pull out ten lines of dialogue you would see *Animaniacs* totally off the air. They would become the most hated show around.

And who would pay any attention to it? Oh, it's just a goofy show. It doesn't get much attention. It's much easier to pinpoint Superman hitting somebody or somebody dying in *Spider-Man*, or someone falling off a roof in *Batman*. People in Congress don't pay that much attention to a show like *Animaniacs*.

ANIMATION PLANET: Probably because of its slapstick nature.

Cawley: Possibly.

ANIMATION PLANET: I understand it's tough to get shows out this season because there is such a demand on the overseas suppliers.

Cawley: Yes. We are creating a ton of animation right now. So just about every studio is in demand.

To give you an idea of the type of demand: When we began *Spider-Man* two years ago and we first started shopping around for studios, there were two studios we were interested in going with. Their bid for the series was a certain figure. Right now those same studios are not any taking less than three times that bid for any show. And they have actually turned away people. They have said, 'No, this is our price. You pay it or you don't.'

These were studios that two years ago were calling American studios saying, 'Do you have a show, Do you have a show, Do you have a show, Do you have a show?' Now they are not. Now you call them and say, 'Hey, we

have a show.' And they say, 'This is our price,' and if you say, 'Well, we're looking to do it for something less,' they go, 'Well then, call someone else.'

It has created a major problem. In fact, it's affected our show greatly because obviously we have a show that has a long period of production. When you have these rates suddenly start increasing it becomes difficult because TMS is getting offers to do shows for much more money than they're getting from us, which two years ago was a lot of money for them. So they were very happy. Now it's like, 'Gee, if we weren't doing *Spider-Man* we could get three times the money from Disney.' So it creates a bit of friction.

That's the same thing with this side of the business, too. You create a budget to do something that takes two years to do. Midway through production, suddenly everybody's rate starts shooting through the ceiling. You're stuck with either paying a lot more for your talent and or watching all your talent leave.

It's as if someone hired you for a job at ten dollars an hour and then suddenly, next year, everybody else who is doing your job is making 25 dollars now. Well, if you are not under contract you will just walk out the door and go get 25 dollars over ten dollars. If you are under contract you are now a very disgruntled employee.

What is happening is, if we were to hire more people we would have to pay 25 dollars an hour. And we may pay 25 dollars an hour for someone who may not have your experience or knowledge only because of the fact that's the going rate we have to pay to get somebody else in. Suddenly we may have somebody who really is a good artist or good animator or good writer making half the money over the mediocre one only because that's the way the contracts were set up.

That's what really happened to some of the people at Disney and Dreamworks. Some of the people who first went in there saw that they were getting good deals, but then when the heat got turned up a lot of people that came in later were making much more money, which was irritating. People said, 'Well gee, I thought that if I was the first to sign on I would get a lot of money because I was showing my dedication.' At the time they thought they were getting a lot of money, but the money has gone up enough so that it wasn't.

ANIMATION PLANET: What if you recommended earlier commitments from a network to go to a series?

Cawley: Earlier helps a little bit, but it only helps in a market that's driven by Saturday morning. See, when Saturday morning was the major animation production, all Saturday morning started in September, pretty much.

So if you got a commitment in April you had only so much time. If you got a commitment in January you had more time.

Well, that worked as long as everybody was doing Saturday morning because basically overseas Studio A, B, and C didn't have any work. So, if you started three months early they were tickled pink that they got work earlier but now they are working year around. Because they are doing 65 of this or 45 of that, or they're doing a prime time series for MTV which is going to start in April and run through June.

Suddenly what you have is year-round production. Well at that point it doesn't really matter how early when you start, because you still have to somehow find a space to squeeze in.

Let's say you are working forty hours a week and you're fully busy. If someone has a project they want to start in, let's say, two months from now, and you say, 'Well, I'll see when I can get to it.' That guy says, 'Hey, I've got good news, I can start a month earlier.' Well, you are still working full time so whether they come in a month early or a month late it doesn't really affect your timing. You are still fully busy. So what you have to do is figure out how to squeeze it in.

What is hurting a lot of these studios now in the pocket book overseas is most studios do use outside contractors. Like TMS will have three or four little sub-studios they use.

ANIMATION PLANET: Which means the quality of work may go down.

Cawley: It'll vary. Actually some of the outside contractors are very good. It's like using freelance talent in this country. You get some good freelancers and some bad freelancers. It's a way of getting all the production done because you have more work than your studio can handle so you hire a couple of little satellite studios.

But what happens is, again, suddenly somebody comes on and, 'We've got to get this show done.' And they go to Satellite A and B and say, 'We'll give you twice as much money if you will do our show.'

Now the major overseas studio is stuck. Like, 'let's see, if I paid them more money, I don't get more money from the US, so I'm going to lose money on the show. If I let these two studios go, I have to now do my work with a third less of the people, which means my staff is going to be really crunched doing a lot of overtime — which once again is going to cost me more money I said the show was going to make.'

This is what is causing studios to push up their prices to guarantee things. It's also making them slower in production, because they're having more production problems on

their end, now.

Finally, the biggest problems studios are having right now is retakes. Literally once a studio has got a show out the door, they're so busy they don't have time to fix anything. These shows that come over full of errors, as all animation will have. Getting these studios to do retakes is very difficult.

ANIMATION PLANET: So isn't one of their tricks in that case is to deliver their show back to the States as close to air date as possible? Cawley: Some try that. A lot of times that's as close as they can get. Because, once again, you have so much going on in the studios. It's just, right now, the industry is very, very busy. And I think even if the 'major networks' drop Saturday morning we'll still be busy. ABC, Fox, and CBS probably produce around 12 - 13 hours a week of animation. That's nothing, compared to everything else. It used to be everything. Now that is ten to twenty percent.

So even if they drop off you're not going to see a big drop in the amount of animation you're going to see. However, what you are going to possibly see, as I said before, is a drop in the amount of money people are willing to spend for animation and possibly the amount of time they are willing to take.

They may have to speed stuff up to be able to get stuff on the air faster and change shows more regularly. Saturday morning is more and more like primetime in the way it is being run. Which it has been moving that way for several years.

In the old days, in primetime, a show would start in September and go until the end of the season. And if it wasn't good it wouldn't be back next season.

Then they started canceling shows mid-season and around Christmas time. Now they cancel a show in a week. It comes on and after two or three shows it's gone. Saturday morning, up until about the mid eighties, or late eighties was still in this full season. You bought a show in September and it ran through August. If it was a dud you just replaced it in September again.

Now, as you still see with Warners and UPN, they're bringing shows on early. Actually Fox was the one who started it. Fox suddenly discovered a few years ago that if they started a new show or two in January, everyone watched Fox, because they had new shows.

Nowadays if an animated series gets on the air and isn't doing well it does get moved or bumped or just dropped and they try to break something else in.

It's not easy to come up with fill-in TV shows for animation. Live action, yes. You'd probably have a couple of pilots sitting around. You can pull them out. And in two or three weeks you have a couple of episodes. You

bring the cast back together and you're all set.

In animation, you don't have that. If you want to cancel a show right now and replace it, you'll need months to replace it. So you have to start using repeats.

Fox brought back *Peter Pan and the Pirates* because basically they need additional programming and they just don't have time to get a whole new series whipped up in time. Sixty-five half hours in a year and a half, and they don't have that. They have got to get something in there right now to fill that time slot. And that's what they've got.

Saturday morning is now a very small market for animation. I think you may see what we can see as Saturday morning gone. What you'll have is children's programming throughout the week on these networks, you know, maybe a *Captain Kangaroo*-type of show or another *Bill Nye the Science Guy*-type of show. But I don't think you are going to see a big block of children's programming because the networks are discovering that the big block of children aren't watching it anymore. They are watching all sorts of other stuff.

ANIMATION PLANET: So when the ratings go down the network has to refund the advertisers.

Cawley: Oh, yes. If a network promises an advertiser a series is going to get a certain rating, what if it doesn't do well? In primetime they say, 'OK, we'll give you another three minutes on next week's show or on the nightly news show, or we'll give you another minute for free.'

But on Saturday morning you can't do that. You're selling Cap'n Crunch cereal on Saturday morning and you only get half the rating you were supposed to get. Then I'm going to say, 'Oh, we'll run that during those ads tonight.' Well, Cap'n Crunch commercials don't run on *Roseanne*.

So you actually have to refund money for Saturday morning frequently. The average network has around 3-4 hours of Saturday morning programming. So you have got to squeeze it in there, but they usually sell all their time out before the season even starts.

If ratings start slipping, they have no place for these advertisers who in theory should get other time. So they just have to pay back. And they are paying back millions of dollars. Again, this comes out of the network's pocket which comes out of the proposed future animation budget. If they know that they can only get half the rating, they are only going to get half the advertising money, so they get half the advertising money so they can only spend half as much as they did last year for animation.

Before NBC went to all live-action they did one test season. They weren't doing very

well on the ratings so they went to DIC and said, 'We want to spend x amount of money for Saturday morning. Can you fill Saturday morning for this money?' And DIC did it. Some of them were so-so shows but very shoddy production because basically NBC tried to get a whole season full of shows for the price of three shows and obviously the ratings didn't improve. They had gone worse and NBC said, 'Forget this, we're going to go to *Saved by the Bell*.'

The other networks — ABC, Fox, and Warners — are going to say, 'Oh, we're only getting half the money we were getting, so we're going to have to cheap the shows up somehow.' To cheap the show up, either you don't worry so much about design, or you don't worry so much about shadows as much, or you do a lot of various things, to cut costs. Maybe you cut the number of episodes to a ten-week schedule. That's what has to happen, but no one really knows where that would lead to. You might see a lot of cheap live action shows.

CBS said that a cheap news show probably wouldn't get any worse ratings than they are getting right now. But it would be much cheaper to do and it would fulfill the FCC requirements. So it's much more attractive as a concept than cartoons which are just going to cost them millions of dollars in lost ratings and not be worth it.

ANIMATION PLANET: But then the cheap educational shows may not get as many viewers either. Viewers may turn to, say, Nickelodeon.

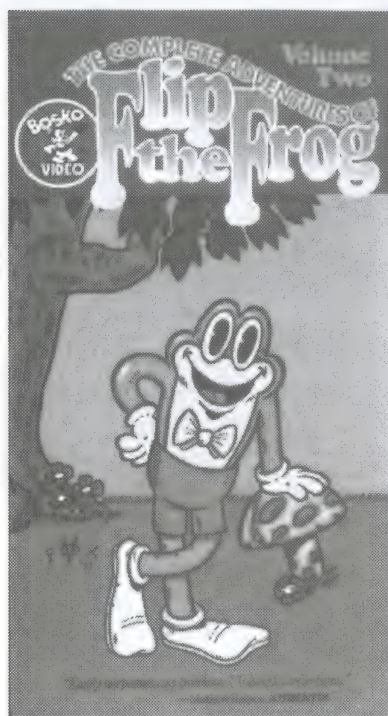
Cawley: They may, but [education] is one thing the networks have to provide. Just like a TV station has to say, 'This is the national warning system', and do the big beep. The station has to do that. Networks have to run three hours of educational programming, and so they will run three hours of educational programming.

ANIMATION PLANET: You have to please the Federal government.

Cawley: Yes.

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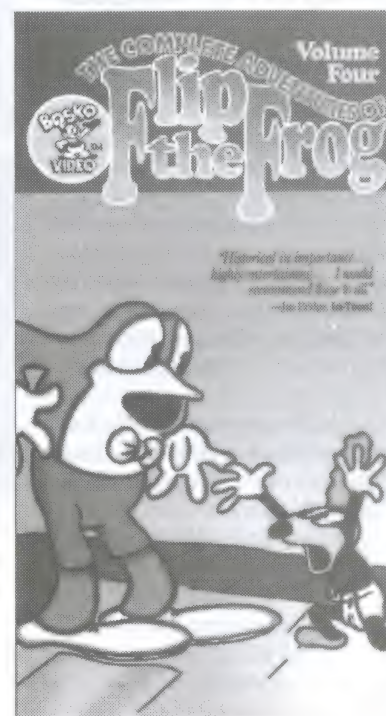
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Stumpers: The Land Before Time

by Bob Miller

What do you remember about the adventures of Littlefoot and his prehistoric pals? Test your memory with this multiple-choice quiz. Choose the best answer to each question, then check your answers at the end of the quiz. Even if you haven't seen *The Land Before Time* (now on video, and on The Disney Channel), it's possible you can score 100%. Have fun!



Littlefoot and Ducky challenge you! (© Universal City Studios, Inc. All rights reserved.)

1. Like *An American Tail*, *The Land Before Time* series introduces impressionable youngsters to the concept(s) of

- a. great storytelling.
- b. classical animation.
- c. communicating with the dead.
- d. premeditated murder.
- e. racism.
- f. c., d. and e.

2. According to the narrator, "The dinosaurs were of two kinds. Some had flat teeth and ate the leaves of trees. Some had sharp teeth for eating meat, and they

- a. went to the dentist more often."
- b. enjoyed every bite."
- c. preyed upon the leaf-eaters."
- d. consumed many calories."
- e. were evil because they were not vegetarians."

3. "The dinosaur herds struck out towards the West, searching for The Great Valley, because

- a. they had nothing better to do."
- b. it had a germ-free environment."
- c. it was a land still lush and green."
- d. it was a sanctuary for talking dinosaurs."
- e. it was a metaphor for heaven."

4. "One herd had only a single baby, their last hope for the future. And they called him

- a. Bluthie."
- b. Bambi."
- c. Littlefoot."
- d. Thunderfoot."
- e. Wimpy."

5. "The Sharpteeth stalked the herds, ready to seize any who strayed." When Littlefoot is hatched, the predators

- a. run away.
- b. eat him up.
- c. pay homage to him.
- d. mind their own business.
- e. declare a holiday.
- f. repent and give up their evil ways.

6. In hatching order, who is oldest to the youngest?

- a. Mama Apatasaur, Littlefoot, Sharptooth, Rooter.
- b. Littlefoot, Petrie, Cera, Ducky.
- c. Ducky, Cera, Littlefoot, Spike.
- d. Hewie, Dewie, Louie.
- e. Dink, Shyler, Flapper, Scat, Crusty.

7. What is the first thing Ducky does when she's hatched?

- a. Cries.
- b. Swims.
- c. Chases a butterfly.
- d. Licks her mother's face.
- e. Says, "yep, yep, yep!"

8. Mama Apatasaur tells her son, "We must walk as far as we can each day until we reach the Great Valley." Why?

- a. To get the required amount of exercise.
- b. Because Daddy Apatasaur is there waiting for them.
- c. The land has been changing.
- d. Three Horns never play with Long Necks.
- e. The paranoids are after them.

9. If Mama has never seen the Great Valley, how does she know it's really there? Her explanation is, "Some things you see with your eyes. Others, you see with your

- a. imagination."
- b. eyes closed."
- c. heart."
- d. nose."
- e. feelings."
- f. Bluth."

10. What is Littlefoot's reaction?

- a. "You're really smart, mother."
- b. "Are you feeling all right, mother?"
- c. "I don't understand, mother."
- d. "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."
- e. "Narf!"

11. According to Mama, a Tree Star is very special. It is a five-pointed leaf that

- a. emits powerful magic.
- b. is composed of chlorophyll.
- c. will help you grow strong.
- d. looks like Don Bluth's mirror.
- e. enables Little to communicate with his mother.

12. The philosophy of Daddy Triceratops and daughter Cera is,

- a. Earthquakes are bad for you.
- b. Tree Stars are very special.
- c. Three horns never play with Long Necks.
- d. You can do impossible things if you follow your heart.
- e. Separation from your family is good

- box office.
13. The reason that Sharptooth, the Tyrannosaurus Rex can't talk like the other dinosaurs is because
 - a. he's just a stupid dinosaur.
 - b. he ate a porcupine.
 - c. it's something not explained in the movie.
 - d. he has laryngitis.
 - e. Three Horns never play with Long Necks.
 14. Sharptooth attacks Littlefoot's mother. The fight is conveniently stopped when
 - a. the animators go to Disney.
 - b. Spielberg thinks it's too violent and cuts the footage.
 - c. an earthquake rocks the area.
 - d. Sharptooth takes a bite out of Mama.
 - e. an asteroid wipes out all the dinosaurs.
 15. Mama's last words before she expires are,
 - a. "Run, Littlefoot, run!"
 - b. "You can do impossible things, if you follow your heart."
 - c. "Let your heart guide you. It whispers, so listen closely."
 - d. "I'll be with you in your heart."
 - e. Gasp. Wheeze. Cough-cough. Gurgle.
 16. What happens when you follow the bright circle past the great rock that looks like a Long Neck and past the mountains that burn?
 - a. You have been following your heart.
 - b. You get lost.
 - c. You find the Great Valley.
 - d. You find the Emerald City of Oz.
 - e. You exit the ride.
 17. Ducky calls herself
 - a. a Duckisaur.
 - b. a Webfoot.
 - c. a Big Mouth.
 - d. a Talker.
 - e. non-union.
 18. Throughout the movie Littlefoot changes colors. Which is his true color?
 - a. Brown.
 - b. Orange.
 - c. Gray.
 - d. Pink.
 - e. Purple.
 - f. All of the above.
 19. What is Petrie's problem?
 - a. Stupidity.
 - b. He talks too much.
 - c. He can't fly.
 - d. He is badly animated.
 - e. His beak is crooked.
 - f. He's not funny.
 - g. He has no personality.
 - h. All of the above.
 20. What does Little have in common with Thumbelina, Stanley the Troll, Hubie the Penguin, and Anastasia?
 - a. A speech impediment.
 - b. Large, bulbous lips.
 - c. Long eyelashes.
 - d. Warts and skin blemishes.
 - e. They all starred in smash-hit features.
 21. What happens when Cera runs into Sharptooth?
 - a. He goes, "Ouch!"
 - b. She goes, "Ouch!"
 - c. He revives.
 - d. She gets a headache.
 - e. Stars swirl around her head and birds sing.
 22. Ducky helps Spike hatch. Spike is a Spike-tail who loves to eat, sleep, and is
 - a. eligible for food stamps.
 - b. a herbivore.
 - c. vocally challenged.
 - d. taller than Littlefoot.
 - e. more than a match for Sharptooth.
 23. Little carries the Tree Star with him until
 - a. it dries up and withers.
 - b. Spike eats it.
 - c. it is stomped on by Sharptooth.
 - d. he arrives at the Great Valley.
 - e. its warranty expires.
 24. Little leads his friends because
 - a. he outsmarted the Sharptooth.
 - b. he carries the magical Tree Star.
 - c. he alone knew the way to the Great Valley.
 - d. he was born to lead.
 - e. he talks to Tree Stars.
 25. The others follow Cera after she
 - a. threatens them.
 - b. discovers the easy way to the Great Valley.
 - c. beats up Littlefoot.
 - d. follows her heart.
 - e. converses with a talking leaf.
 26. Leaving Little behind, Cera's team encounters
 - a. lions and tigers and bears. Oh, my!
 - b. a pair of singing velociraptors.
 - c. a volcanic eruption, tar pits, lava.
 - d. drought, sandstorms, a blizzard.
 - e. the Flintstones.
 27. Cera is too proud to admit she'd gone the wrong way, so she
 - a. blames her heart for being wrong.
 - b. sacrifices herself to the Sharptooth.
 - c. pouts by a waterfall.
 - d. brags she was right all along.
 - e. leaves the dinos, forever.
 28. The dino-tykes plot to get rid of Sharptooth once and for all. To lure him to a watery death, they bait Sharptooth with
 - a. Petrie.
 - b. Silicon graphics.
 - c. Ducky.
 - d. Large juicy worms.
 - e. Tasty cows.
 29. Petrie first flies when
 - a. Cera butts him off a cliff.
 - b. he steps in lava.
 - c. Sharptooth snorts at him.
 - d. he goes on a diet.
 - e. he follows his heart.
 30. A voice in the clouds tells Littlefoot
 - a. he is hallucinating.
 - b. "Run! Run from the Sharptooth!"
 - c. the location of the Great Valley.
 - d. "You are the greatest Littlefoot in all the world."
 - e. a great and terrible storm is coming.
 - f. None of the above. Clouds cannot talk.
 31. By the time the dinos reach the Great Valley, they have learned the value of
 - a. pi.
 - b. the Circle of Life.
 - c. teamwork and getting along.
 - d. with great power comes great responsibility.
 - e. meat-eaters are bad for you.
 32. In *The Land Before Time II: The Great Valley Adventure*, the dinos contend with these threats:
 - a. A limited animation budget.
 - b. Song and dance routines.
 - c. Sharpteeth, egg-stealing velociraptors, volcanoes.
 - d. More racism.
 - e. the loss of Don Bluth.
 - f. Turning into oil.
 33. What does Bambi have in common with *The Land Before Time*?
 - a. fleas.
 - b. Animals pay homage to Bambi and Littlefoot.
 - c. Bambi's and Little's mothers are killed.
 - d. Bambi and Little mature to adulthood.
 - e. Faline and Ducky say, "I said, hello!"
 - f. b., c. and e.
- The real answer to each question ... is "c," for every question except #1 and #18, which is "f."

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NEWS & Views

From
Page
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Spawn-
From Page 45

Subtitled, Color, VHS Hi-Fi Stereo,
60 Minutes

Contains brief nudity, violence, and adult
situations

In many ways, *Blue Seed* is a title I WANT to like. I mean, by all appearances, this is a first-rate production. I have always admired the work of manga artist Yuzo Takada (*3x3 Eyes* and *All-Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku-Nuku*), the animation is superb, and the voice actors are some of the best in the business. There just seems to be something wrong. But I digress from actually reviewing this tape.

KNA



© AD Visions

The first two episodes of *Blue Seed* tell of a fifteen year-old girl named Momiji, who spends her days preparing to become a sacrifice to her country "when the time comes." She simply goes along with it, not having any idea what is going on, until an odd, orange-skinned boy named Mamoru encounters her on the way to school, and says he is going to kill her! As this is about to happen, an "Aragami" (a demonic monster and mankind's oldest enemy), stops him. Also, members of the "Terrestrial Administration Center" arrive to break things up. However, Momiji slips out of the TAC's grasp, and she proceeds to school.

Allowing Momiji to escape is an incredible blunder for the TAC, because her safety is essential, not only to the survival of Japan, but to the whole world. The blood of her ancestors had supposedly sealed away the Aragami for all-time, but now they are loose, and seek to remove the power of Momiji's ancestral blood in order to gain control over the Earth. These Aragami can manipulate and cause any living thing to mutate into whatever form they choose. Now, Momiji's school is

under attack by one of these monsters who has taken control of a tree.

Mamoru reappears at the school and apparently saves Momiji's life. Yet, upon this happening, he now tells Momiji again that he must kill her! He tells her that he used to be a servant of the Aragami, and he was tasked by them to PROTECT Momiji, so that THEY can "properly" kill her. Now, he must shed her blood in order to stop them. Meanwhile, the TAC battle to neutralize the Aragami is wrecking the school, and attempting to kill both Momiji and Mamoru. You will notice

that there is a LOT of conflict going on here.

Perhaps it is because I have only seen the first episodes of this series, but the rather confused matter of the conflicts involved with the story puts me off. I mean, if Momiji is supposed to be sacrificed to seal away the Aragami, the why do the TAC want to stop Mamoru from taking care of the business of killing her?

If she is to be killed anyway, I do not see why the TAC are so utterly concerned with Momiji's safety. But like I said, I am pretty early into this series, and if *Blue Seed* is like Takada's other horror tales, the whole matter is probably very complicated.

I guess one matter that most bothered me about these episodes was having poor Momiji go through them almost the entire time wearing nothing but her school blouse and panties. I thought that for a television program (even one from Japan), it was just a bit too titillating. I guess the jury will still be out on this one. I do like some of the elements of the story, and like I said earlier, the visual and audio presentation is excellent.

Just one last bit of information about this tape. Placed at the end of the closing credits of episode #2, there is a fun bit of "extra" animation. Here, two of the main male characters are presented as voyeuristic, camera-bugs, but they get their just-desserts in the end. After all the heavy drama, this comedic end helps break the tension. **John Beam**

talent and doing all of that while we were actually in production on the show, I would say we're 85% in the good for the show, all things considered in animation quality and in what we set out to do and what we were actually able to achieve.

I look at *Spawn* as a stepping stone. I want to do more original projects in the future that are off the beaten track. I just want to keep pushing the envelope and do bigger and better storytelling.

I don't want to do the standard stuff. I've done that, and the industry will continue to do that. That's great; I think it has its place. But I'm looking to do different things and there's a lot of talent out there that feels the same. We're trying to break the door down so that more people can flood in and take the taboo off of it.

We're not going to sit back and go, 'Wouldn't it be great to do a show like this?' No. We're going to just do the show.

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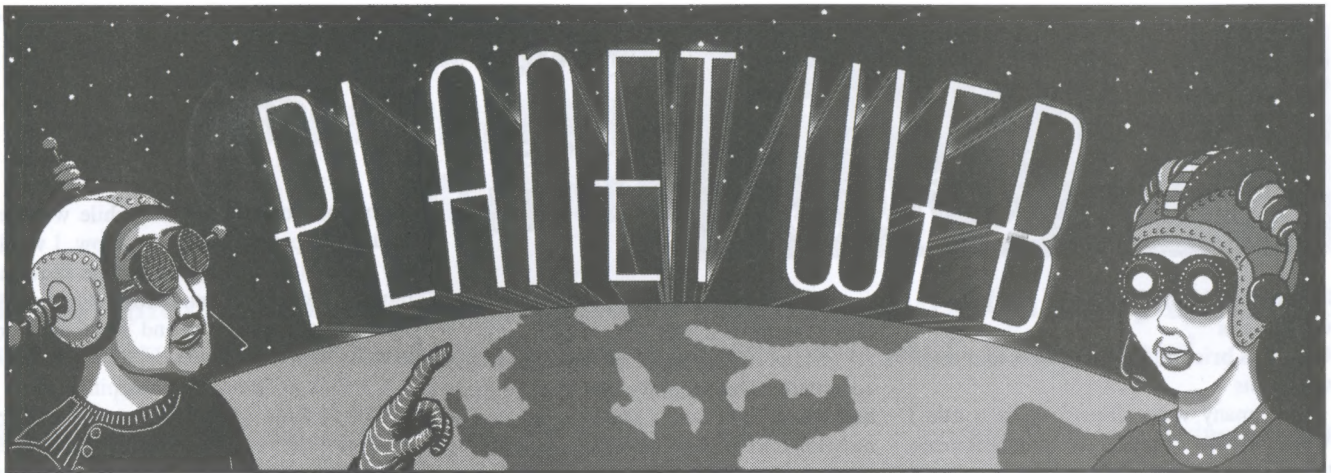


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**Your comments and
questions
are always welcomed!**



by Gene Gumbs

One of the benefits of this great information age is the chance to sit down at your computer and completely waste countless hours surfing the internet seeing what there is to see. In my work with our esteemed editor, Mike Dobbs, I decided that I could justify all the time I spend at home on the net to my wife, by exploring animation web sites, and letting the readers know what is worth their wasted time, and what is truly a waste of precious goofing off time.

I am excited about bringing my surfboard to a new and exciting beach here at Animation Planet, and letting you know where to catch

Twisted." If your taste in animation runs towards the gross side or adult in nature, then this is the place you'll want to check out. Sick and Twisted is where Beavis and Butthead their start.

One interesting spot on the site is a call for animators to send in their demo reels or pencil tests to Mello Manor, for possible inclusion in the next Festival.

The site is attractive, with plenty of stills from Sick and Twisted and the Animation Festival. Yet, there is an awful lot of blank space on the bottom of each page that could be filled with more or larger graphics. ●●●●● of 5

The Non-Stick MGM Cartoon Page (www.nonstick.com)

This may be the best site animation site I have encountered to date! Jay McCarthy, the man behind the site, has put together an incredible retrospective of MGM classic animation.

It has a database that allows a surfer to search by character, title or director, and also has a list of all the old MGM titles available on both video and laserdisc. MGM used a myriad of directors for its animation, and McCarthy has included a list of them all and the individual pieces they directed.

There is a list of books recommended if you want to learn more about the glory days of animation at MGM, and a complete listing of characters that appeared in the old 'toons, and a little on all of the Academy Award winners.

Perhaps my favorite part of the site, though, is an archive of 79 stills that feature some of the directors, animators, and famous characters that have appeared in MGM features. Add to that, a link to thousands of sound bites, and you have a multimedia paradise that can make serious animation fans giddy!



The two times I logged into the site, I found it to be a bit slow, which can be a little frustrating at times. Despite that little problem, I found this place a great stop and can't recommend it highly enough!

●●●●● of 5

The Animation Destination

(www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Hills/8091)

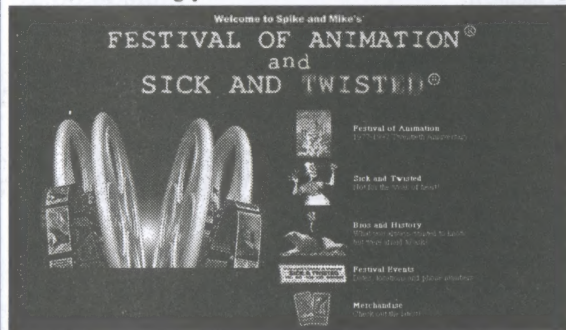
This little site was done by an animation fan. While not loaded with content, it is pleasing to look at, with plenty of graphics of movie posters and video boxes to go along with his snippets on some of his favorite videos.

One of the first pieces you see is a review of the *Thief and the Cobbler* - well not exactly a review but some observations he made while watching it.

There is a small section on upcoming releases at the movies and on video. He previews *Cats Don't Dance*, *Hercules*, and *Anastasia*, and gives the reader his take on the film's chance of success.

The site's creator has obviously watched a lot of animated features, and seems fairly knowledgeable on the subject.... think I'm going to talk to Mike about recruiting this guy!

●●●●● of 5



the best internet animation waves!

Spike and Mike Online! (www.spikeandmike.com)

If your taste in cartoons and animation leans toward the warped side, then this is the place for you! Craig "Spike" Decker and the late Mike Gribble started Mellow Manor Productions in 1977 to give independent animators and avenue for their work. Renowned animators like Tim Burton, John Lasseter, and Bill Plympton all got their starts with Spike and Mike.

The website features highlights of the Spike and Mike Festival of Animation that is now in its twentieth year. It shows stills of some of the animated works it has showcased over the years.

There is also a section titled "Sick and

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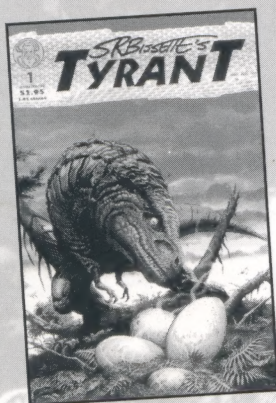
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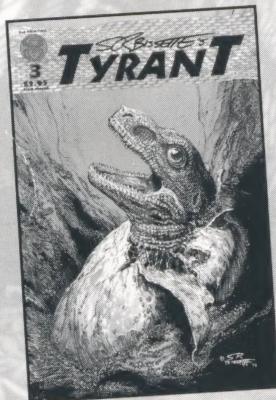


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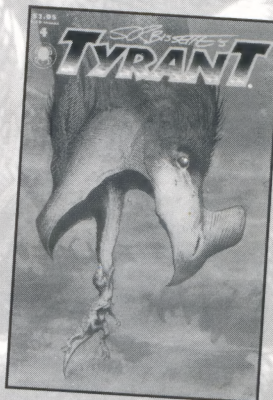


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